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# S E R M O N S

ON THE

## GOSPELS,

FOR

EVERY SUNDAY THROUGHOUT THE YEAR,

WITH

AN APPROPRIATE SERMON FOR THE  
FIRST AND LAST SUNDAY.

BY THE

REV. JAMES WHEELER, M.A.

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VOL. I.

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## PREFACE.

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THE Author of the following discourses, at the solicitation of several of his friends, who heard them delivered, has ventured, with the approbation of those in whose judgment he thinks he has reason to confide, to give them publicity.

They consist of an exposition of the Gospel for each Sunday throughout the year, followed by reflections obviously arising from it, and those too, in general, mainly confined to some one particular subject. They are addressed both to the understanding and the heart, with a view to the promotion of warm and solid piety. Prefixed to them is an appropriate Sermon for the first Sunday of the Year, and a similar one for the last Sunday is subjoined at the close. The temper which pervades them will, he trusts, be found to be that of the Gospel, equally removed from the opposite extremes, of excessive severity on the one hand, and too indulgent laxity on the other ; and the style in which they are written has been accommodated, as much as possible, to the capacities of general readers, without being offensive (if so the Author may be allowed to presume), to the more cultivated taste of those who have had the advantage of a superior education.

Although he has not omitted to expose, without palliation or disguise, the judgments of God, denounced in the Sacred Oracles, against unrepenting sinners, he has deemed it more consonant to the spirit of Christianity to dwell principally on such considerations as he conceived to be more congenial to the character of those who are denominated in Holy Writ adopted children of God, and who, as such, are encouraged to look up to him with reverential, indeed, yet filial, affection, as to their Father who is in Heaven. "For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear," says St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, "but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry Abba (Father.)" (ROM. c. viii. v. 15.)

Whilst the Author fondly cherishes a persuasion (and he hopes, in so doing, he is not deceived), that the promotion of the spiritual interests, as formerly, of his hearers, so now of his readers, is the main object to which his feeble endeavours have been directed, he is not ashamed to confess his weakness, (if it be a weakness) in acknowledging the pleasure which he will unavoidably derive from the approbation of those whose good opinion he highly values; prepared, at the same time, in the event of failure in that respect, to submit with resignation, in the humble hope that even his unsuccessful attempt will be graciously considered by that Omniscient and Merciful Being, "who is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (HEB. c. v. v. 12.)

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## SERMON I.

### THE FIRST SUNDAY OF THE YEAR.

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ON PUTTING ON THE "NEW MAN" WITH THE NEW YEAR.

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"WHAT is there that hath been? The same thing that shall be. What is there that hath been done? The same thing that shall be done. Nothing under the sun is new; neither is any man able to say, behold this is new; for it hath already gone before in the ages that were before us." (ECCLES. c. i. v. 9-10.)

THE passage in the book of Ecclesiastes, from which last Sunday\* I took occasion to address you, furnished me with an opportunity of taking a retrospective view of the year which was then drawing to a close, and of submitting to you such reflexions as it naturally gave birth to. That year is now no more. It is gone by; and we have now entered upon another year, which is rapidly pursuing the course of its predecessor, and, like it, will at length be wholly swallowed up in the gulph of eternity, there to mix with the years beyond the deluge. The same inspired author, who, from the text of last Sunday, suggested to me the idea of looking back upon the past, has also, from that which I have selected for this

\* The discourse here alluded to is that of the last Sunday in the year.

Sunday, induced me, in like manner, to look forward to the future. For, with the hand of a master, and a few strokes of the pencil, he has boldly delineated a striking picture of the events and transactions of the whole of the current year, which yet is little more than two or three days old. He tells us that all that will happen in it will be no more than a repetition of what had happened before; that all that will be, has been; that all that will be done, hath been done. "What is there that hath been? The same thing that shall be. What is there that hath been done? The same thing that shall be done." And having established the principle that no such thing as novelty is to be discovered beneath the sun, he appeals for the truth of it to the occurrences of former times, in opposition to the possible pretensions of those who might be disposed to controvert it. "Nothing under the sun is new, neither is any man able to say; behold, this is new. For it hath already gone before in the ages that were before us." These observations of the royal sage you will soon see confirmed by your own experience. The sun will continue to rise and set as in former years. It will pursue as heretofore its annual course through the heavens. The vicissitudes of seasons will mark as usual its majestic progress. The Spring will restore their foliage to the trees. It will cover the fields with its verdant mantle, adorned with a rich embroidery of flowers of various hues and fragrance. Summer

will promote by its genial warmth the advancement of vegetation. Autumn will complete the unfinished work of Summer; and then will Winter again come round, and disfiguring the fair face of Nature with its snows, its sleets and its storms, will give to it once more the same desolate appearance which it now exhibits. Nor will the affairs and transactions of men distinguish more the present year from those which have preceded it, than the inanimate works of creation. For, as in every foregoing year, so also in the present, men will again be born, and they will marry, and they will die. They will continue to run the same round of occupations and pursuits as their fathers did before them. Some will go to their merchandise, some to their farms, and others to their amusements. There will be the same distinction of ranks, conditions, and talents, as there have ever been. But that great leveller, Death, has no regard to any of these distinctions. And, as in former years, so also in the present, he will be seen stalking with gigantic step through all the various departments of life, trampling under his feet the children of mortality, and sweeping them indiscriminately into the common receptacle of all that is mortal. So true it is, that as the wise man observes, "what has been, will be, what has been done, will be done, and that nothing under the sun is new." And thus may the new year, as it is called, be aptly compared with a new edition of an old book, which, with little or no material

alteration, will be found to convey the same information as those which were published before. It is an old annual register with a new date ; that is all. And even its very date is distinguished from that of the last which made its appearance, which is already out of print, by no other difference than that of the least of all numeral figures, a solitary unit. For as the date of the last was the year of the Lord 1833, so that of the present is the year of the Lord 1834. And yet, my friends, I will not hesitate to assert, that this same year, which, in conformity with the observation contained in the text, I have said will have nothing of novelty in it, may become a new year to *you*. Nor is there any thing in this assertion contradictory either to the words of inspiration, or to what I have myself advanced. For the words of inspiration, as well as what I have myself advanced, relate to the natural course of things. But when I maintain that this year may become a new year to *you*, it is to a supernatural order of things that I advert. And how, it may be asked, considered in this latter point of view, may the year be rendered new ? Why, my friends, I will tell you. It is by a complete renovation of your minds and hearts. It is, in the language of the great apostle of the Gentiles, “ by being renewed in the spirit of your minds ; by putting off, according to the former conversation, the old man, who is corrupted according to the desires of error, and by putting on the new man, who, according to God,



is created in justice, and holiness of truth.”— (*Eph.* c. iv. v. 22, 23, 24.) Such, my friends, are the measures to be adopted, in order to render the year a new one. Adopt them, and I have no difficulty in declaring my full conviction, that not only it will be to *you* a new year, but a happy new year.

The reason for which, both in the events of nature and in the transactions of men, which take place in each succeeding year, no material novelty is discovered, is this, that we are accustomed to view them with the eyes of the old man, who, in the language of the apostle, “is corrupted according to the desires of error,” and not with those of the “new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth.” Hence, when men look abroad upon the works of nature; when they contemplate the alternations of day and night; when they witness the regular vicissitudes of the seasons; when they behold the various productions of the earth; and consider the different conditions, occupations and pursuits of individuals and of nations, they discern nothing more than a reiterated exhibition of the same objects, presented to them by a wheel in perpetual rotation. But, would they apply to the eyes of their mind the perspective of faith, and would they open their hearts to the powerful influence of God’s holy Spirit, the whole of the scene, I will venture to say, would undergo a change which would fill them with astonishment.

They would then behold a new heaven and a new earth, and every surrounding object would wear a garb of novelty. "Thou wilt send forth thy Spirit," says the Psalmist, "and they shall be created, and thou wilt renew the face of the earth." (PSALM 10.) Yes, my friends, with the perspective of faith applied to your minds, and the Spirit of God working at your hearts, you will discover a spectacle, of which, before, you had no conception. A new creation, as it were, will start up to your view. When you behold the sun rising majestically from behind those hills, and pouring abroad the day, you will see in it an emblem of the divine effulgence of that omnipotent Being who inhabiteth light inaccessible, and who, by the brightness of his illumination, transmitted through the medium of that eternal sun of justice, "the splendour of his own glory, and the very image of his substance, enlighteneth those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and directeth their feet into the way of peace." When you watch the motions of the same magnificent source of light and heat, in its progress through the heavens, and observe the wonderful effects that accompany it, your views will be raised to that great mind which presides over the whole of this astonishing system, and directs, in secret, its inconceivable operations. When you notice that immense profusion of leaves, spreading themselves in every direction over the branches of the stateliest trees, up to

their very summits ; when you behold the green herbage covering the fields, the flowers displaying their various tints, the fruit dangling from the boughs which sustain it, and the ears of corn bending beneath the weight of their abundance, you will admire the sagacity of that mighty intellect, which, by means invisible to the human eye, and incomprehensible to the human understanding, could contrive to produce such a prodigious variety of extensive, useful, and beautiful results. When you listen to the sprightly notes of the songsters of the grove ; when you see the lambkins skipping about by the side of their dams, and indicating in every motion the most vivid sensations of pleasure, and the sheep and cattle grazing comfortably in the meadows, fearless of danger, and unconscious of their future destiny, you will discover in them so many lively instances of God's goodness, delighting to diffuse itself among the creatures of his hands, in imparting to them enjoyments suitable to their respective conditions. And, finally, when you cast your eyes on man, that most highly distinguished of sublunary beings, to whose use and benefit every other creature of the earth which he inhabits, animate as well as inanimate, appears to have been made subservient ; when you behold him uniting with the inferior powers of animal gratification, the more exquisite faculties of sentimental delight, and the still more sublime capacity of intellectual enjoy-



ment, you will recognize in him the chosen object of that special benignity of his Maker, in his regard, which is properly expressed by the term philanthropy. And the view of such a multiplicity of opening scenes, not less conspicuous for their grandeur than for their novelty, will induce you, in transports of the highest admiration, to exclaim, with the Psalmist, “ O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is thy name in the whole earth !” (PSALM 8.)

And as in the works of nature, so also in the affairs and transactions of men, the charms of novelty will every where disclose themselves to your renovated minds. For whilst you gaze on all the various circumstances, lots, and conditions of men in society ; whilst you see some elevated to the highest pinnacle of human greatness, and others reduced to the most abject state of slavery ; whilst here you observe the votaries of sensuality rioting in all the excesses of extravagant luxury, and then the children of poverty and want earning with difficulty, and with the sweat of their brow, a scanty subsistence for themselves and families ; whilst you perceive the profligate rearing their heads on high, like the cedars of Libanus, and the virtuous trampled upon by them, like the dust of the earth ; whilst you contemplate, in short, those incessant conflicts of contending passions let loose upon the world, and transforming it, as it were, into one vast arena of gladiators ; whilst you behold ambition, jealousy, revenge,



and every other disorderly and corrupt principle of the heart of man, disturbing the peace and order of society by their destructive ravages ; whilst you discover, I say, all these things, and Nature, from within, may seem to whisper, this should not be so ; you will raise up your eyes aloft, and there descrying, through the medium of faith, the omnipotent arm of the Great Universal Governor suspended over the whole, and directing it to the accomplishment of his eternal designs ; you will rest satisfied with the unseemly spectacle ; every disposition to complain or murmur will be instantaneously checked ; and you will adore, in silent and humble submission, the boundless power, wisdom, and goodness of that incomprehensible Being, who compels even the elements of discord and destruction to promote the general order and harmony of the universe. Thus have I shown you, that, by the renovation of your minds, you will cause the current year to become to you a new year. But that is not the whole of what I advanced ; for I also asserted, that by the same means, you would render it, moreover, a happy new year. And of this it shall, in the next place, be my endeavour to convince you.

Did no other consequence result from the renovation of your minds prescribed by the Apostle, than the disclosure of new scenes, of such admirable grandeur and beauty, both in the works of nature and in the affairs and transactions of men,

yet that alone would contribute, it must be acknowledged, in no small degree, to your satisfaction and delight, and consequently to the promotion of the happiness of the new year. But great as that advantage must be allowed to be, it is by no means the only one, nor is it even the principal one of which it will be found to be productive. The chief and most valuable benefit derived from the renovation of the mind, is to be looked for in the condition of the mind itself, in its exemption on the one hand, from that inward disorder, vexation and trouble, excited by the tumult of ungoverned passions, and in its fruition, on the other hand, of that internal peace, serenity, and joy, which the influence of principles of an opposite description, of humility, meekness, resignation, charity, with all the rest of their associate virtues, will not fail to exercise over it. For having “crucified the old man with his passions and lusts, and being transformed into the new man who is according to God,” such must necessarily be the corresponding effects which will be produced within you by so blessed a revolution. In your intercourse with the world, and in all the various circumstances and events of life, it will also be attended with the most happy consequences. It will secure to you, it is highly probable, the esteem and good-will of all who know you. For they whose passions are kept under control, who seek not to exalt themselves above their just measure, who treat not others with haughtiness and

contempt, who yield not to the tormenting and anti-social impulse of a fretful, querulous, or contentious spirit, but who are kind, gentle, compassionate, and affable to all around them, and who embrace with alacrity every opportunity to afford them pleasure, or to promote their interest ; they, I say, (and such will be your character if you be really “ renewed in the spirit of your minds,”) are usually the objects of universal approbation, esteem, and attachment. But should the case be otherwise, should you meet with a return the very reverse of that, which I do maintain you have every reason to expect ; should you, instead of being approved, esteemed, and loved, be censured, contemned, and disliked ; should your intentions be misrepresented, your actions ridiculed, your persons insulted, you will still preserve unruffled the serenity of your souls ; and in the midst of all the storms which may assail you from without, you will feel secure within, under the powerful protection of the God of heaven, on whose divine assistance you will confidently rely. Whatever your condition in life may be, you will be satisfied with it, as that which has been allotted to you by your infinitely wise and bountiful Creator, in which he designs you to work out your salvation. Your grand concern will be to discharge with fidelity the duties attached to it : and, however painful or laborious they may be, the consideration of the good and powerful master in whose employ you are engaged, whose



ever-wakeful eye is constantly fixed upon you, and who will reward hereafter your diligence in his service with a liberality exceeding all comprehension, will prompt you to perform them with cheerfulness and alacrity. No anxious cares, no tormenting solitudes, will be suffered to disturb the tranquillity of your minds. Grateful for the blessings which you possess at present, you will repose yourselves with confidence respecting future contingencies, on the providential goodness of the universal Disposer. Should your industrious exertions be crowned with success, you will bless the beneficent hand from which you will thankfully acknowledge it to have proceeded; and should they, on the contrary, terminate in misfortune, you will discover also in that misfortune a merciful dispensation from the same source, less pleasing, it is true, to the feelings of flesh and blood, but in the estimation of him who perceives at a single glance the most intricate links in the whole concatenation of causes and effects from the beginning to the end of time, more suitable to the promotion of your permanent interests. Should you writhe under the anguish of pain, or languish in infirmity on the bed of sickness, the consolations of heaven will ever be at hand to afford you relief: and should some more grievous domestic calamity diffuse around you a melancholy gloom, still you will not be left without resource. For the light of immortality breaking in upon you from that refulgent luminary the Gospel of Jesus Christ,

will gladden even the house of mourning with its exhilarating rays. Nor will death itself, should you possibly see it advancing towards you, be viewed as an object of terror and dismay. Terrible indeed it is, as well it may be, to the votaries of incredulity, since they contemplate in it the extinction of their being. More terrible still to the professors of Christianity who live in an habitual violation of its laws; for they can behold it in no other light than as the commencement of an eternity of inconceivable wretchedness. But as to the faithful disciple of Jesus Christ; as to him "who is renewed in the spirit of his mind, who has put off the old man, who is corrupted according to the desires of error, who has put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth," and who has been in the habit of walking in newness of life, why should he fear? What has he to apprehend? He looks upon Death as his mighty deliverer, as the great demolisher of those prison walls which hold in captivity his free-born spirit, and from which, having been set free, it will wing its flight to those blissful regions of immortality, where it will range and expatiate with unrestrained liberty, associated with beings of similar dispositions, and surrounded with a profusion of unutterable delights. Nor is that all; for, from the ruins of those prison walls which will be laid under ground, he foresees, at the sound of the archangel's voice, a magnificent structure rising up

before him, suitable to the improved and elevated condition of the blessed tenant of which it is destined to be the future habitation. "For this corruptible," saith St. Paul, "must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. And when this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, O Death, where is thy victory? O Death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. xv. 53, 54, 55.)

Thus, my friends, have I endeavoured to show you, that by the renovation of your minds, you will render to yourselves the year on which you have just entered, not only a new year, but a happy new year. Yes, my friends, it will be to you a happy new year; it will be to you a year of jubilee, for it will be distinguished by circumstances similar to those which marked the Jewish period of that denomination. Like the Jewish jubilee, it will be "a year sacred and acceptable to the Lord." Like the Jewish jubilee, it will be a year of undisturbed repose; and, like the Jewish jubilee, it will also be a year of the remission of debts, of emancipation from servitude, and of restoration of property to its original owner. Of the remission, I mean, of the debts of sin, of the emancipation of the affections from the servitude of the passions, and of the restoration of your hearts to their great original owner, the living God. Finally, it will be a preparation for that great Sabbatical year of Eternity, when, resting for ever from the labours of your mortal

lives, you will enjoy without interruption that everlasting repose in the heavenly Jerusalem, which is there reserved for God's faithful servants. That to you, my friends, it may truly be a year of happiness of this description, is the sincere wish of my heart; and that this wish may be fully accomplished, I pray God, in his infinite goodness, to grant, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*



## SERMON II.

### THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

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ON THE OBSERVANCE OF SUNDAYS AND HOLIDAYS, AND  
THE DUTIES OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

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GOSPEL. *St. Luke*, ii. v. 42-52.—And when Jesus was twelve years old, they going up into Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast, and having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem; and his parents knew it not. And thinking that he was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought him among their kinsfolks and acquaintance. And not finding him they returned into Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his wisdom and his answers. And seeing him, they wondered; and his mother said to him, Son, why hast thou done so to us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said to them, How is it that you sought me? did you not know that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the word that he spoke unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and was subject to them. And his mother kept all these words in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and man.

THE Gospel of this Sunday presents us with an interesting and circumstantial account of a remarkable occurrence in the private life of our blessed Saviour, whilst he dwelt in obscurity under the humble roof of his parents at Nazareth.



It states in the first place, that when Jesus had attained his twelfth year, he was conducted by his Virgin Mother, and his reputed father Saint Joseph, to the city of Jerusalem, there to celebrate, with them, according to their annual custom, the Feast of the Passover. 2ndly. That on the expiration of that solemn festival, (which lasted seven days) they set out on their return home, imagining their beloved son to be in company with them. 3rdly. That having proceeded a day on their journey, and sought him in vain among their friends and relatives, they went back to Jerusalem, where, after a most active and diligent search, they found at length, to their no small amazement and delight, the dear object of their anxious pursuit, seated in the temple, amidst the doctors of the law, listening to, and interrogating them, and astonishing those who witnessed the extraordinary scene, by the sagacity of his questions, and the excellence of his replies. 4thly. That his Virgin Mother having given vent to her feelings in that gentle expostulation, so expressive of maternal affection, "son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.;" and having received for answer, that it behoved him to be engaged in the concerns of his heavenly father, "how is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my father's business?" silently acquiesced, as did her venerable spouse, in the mysterious reply, though, at the same time, they were utterly

at a loss to comprehend its meaning. “And they understood not the word that he spoke unto them.” 5thly. That he accompanied them home to Nazareth; that his conduct towards them, was there distinguished by dutiful submission to their parental authority, and that every particular of this remarkable series of events, was to the devout Mary, a secret subject of profound meditation. “And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them. And his mother kept all these words in her heart.” And finally, that the transcendant wisdom of the holy Jesus, and the estimation in which he was held both by God and man, were progressively manifested, as he advanced in age. “And Jesus increased in wisdom and age,\* and grace with God and men.” Such, my friends, is in substance, the account given to us in this day’s gospel, of an event, constituting the whole of the intelligence to be depended upon as authentic, respecting our blessed Saviour, from an early period of his youth, to the time of the baptism administered to him by his precursor on the banks of the Jordan, preparatory to his entrance on the discharge of the functions of his public ministry, and from which, I purpose to submit to your consideration, a few reflections that it has obviously suggested to my mind.

\* The Greek word *ἡλικία* is used to express either age or stature. The former is the usual rendering in this passage, but the latter appears to me to be the true meaning.

The first object, which an attentive perusal of this interesting narrative immediately presents to our notice, is the exemplary piety of the devout couple in this holy family, who were not only themselves in the habit of going annually to the city of Jerusalem for the celebration of the Feast of the Passover, but who, when their son was of a proper age, conducted him also with them on the return of that solemnity. “And his parents went every year to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast.” What an admirable model is here exhibited to parents of punctuality, in assisting at the public worship of the church, on festivals appointed to be kept holy, and of causing their children, when at the age of discretion, to accompany them thither on those solemn occasions! I am indeed aware of the observation which will no doubt be made, that in a country like this, in which the religion which you profess, is not the established religion of the state, and in which therefore, the people at large pay no attention to its sacred ordinances, you can not, consistently with that just regard which is due to the subsistence of yourselves and families, sanctify as you would wish, those great solemnities consecrated to the worship of the living God. Far be it from me, my friends, to lay burthens upon you which you are unable to bear. Far be it from me to counteract in any manner, those strenuous exertions which the support of yourselves and offspring imperiously demands. Nor is it the



design of your holy mother the church, to lay injunctions upon you of such unreasonable severity, but conformably to the doctrine of holy writ, she may be conceived on the contrary, thus to address you in the language of St. Paul, "if any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1. TIM. c. v. v. 8.) Whenever therefore a strict observance of her positive institutions, is not compatible with the paramount obligations of maintenance, which you indispensably owe, both to yourselves, and to those, who under heaven, look up to you for their daily bread, it is not, by any means, her intention to enforce them in your regard. But you are to observe at the same time, that as she has appointed her ministers the guardians of her discipline, and has left it to them to decide when such cases really occur, it is incumbent upon you, when you consider yourselves to be so circumstanced, to make application to them, and to abide respectfully by their decisions.

Reasonable however, as the observation, which has been stated respecting festivals appointed by the church, must be allowed to be, and willing as I am to give it every due consideration, yet there is one festival of *divine* institution, to which it can not be admitted to be justly applicable : and that is the festival of the Lord's day, which by Christians of every denomination, is universally consecrated to the service of the Most High. To

plead the necessity of your strenuous exertions for the support of yourselves and families as an excuse for absenting yourselves from public worship on that sacred day, when by the laws of the state, as well as those of God, all earthly business is ordered to be suspended, that the more important concerns of eternity may be attended to, is a pretence as inadmissible, as it is groundless. Yet in default of that, I am well aware that other pleas are sometimes set up as apologies for neglect of this important duty. The hardships which you may have had to undergo, the fatigues which you may have suffered from morning to night, during the six long preceding days, require, you will perhaps tell me, a short interval of repose, and relaxation, to enable you to return with renewed vigor to a repetition of the labors to which your hard lot has subjected you. My dearly beloved friends—I am not ignorant of the toils and sufferings, which the conditions of life, in which it has pleased divine providence to place you, compel you to endure. Nor am I so constituted as to be insensible to the force of your pathetic appeal. One day out of seven set apart for repose and relaxation is not, I confess, an unreasonable indulgence. But where, may I be permitted to ask you, where can you enjoy more refreshing repose, than within the arms of the divine mercy stretched out to receive you in his sacred temple? Where can you experience more exhilarating relaxation, than within those hallowed walls, where, in con-

junction with your brethren in Jesus Christ, you are cheerfully employed in pouring forth your hearts in tributes of adoration, love, and gratitude, to your father who is in heaven? Is it not there that his Holy Spirit is prepared to descend into your hearts, and by his celestial influence, to repair your wasted strength, and to animate you with fresh vigour for a renewal of your exertions? Is it not there that the minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ delivers to you those precious words of eternal life, so replete with comfort to the afflicted soul, and so calculated to cheer your drooping spirits? Is it not there, in short, that in your devout intercourse with the adorable author of your existence, and in the contemplation of those great and everlasting joys which he has reserved for you hereafter, you lose sight of the troubles of the present time, amidst the satisfactions and delights of such heavenly communications, and the transporting anticipations of future bliss?

But then it is urged, that other circumstances sometimes occur, which oppose obstacles to a constant attendance on public worship. Personal indisposition, distance of place, badness of the roads, and inclemency of the weather, are not unfrequently assigned, as sufficient pleas, to justify violations of this sacred ordinance. It does not however appear, that the devout persons, whom I recommend to you, as models for your imitation, were prevented by considerations of this descrip-



tion, from repairing annually to the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, although that city was distant, twenty-seven leagues, or upwards of eighty English miles from Nazareth, the place of their abode. But waving that circumstance, I will put a case to you perfectly applicable to the subject in question, and, I am willing that your own decision in one instance, shall regulate your conduct in the other. I will suppose a personage of high rank, to have invited his dependents to a sumptuous entertainment, and I will suppose you to be in the number of those dependents; is such the state of your health, the distance of your residence, the badness of the roads, or the severity of the weather, as to hinder you from availing yourselves of his gracious invitation? if so, I am satisfied that the same reasons be admitted in justification of your absence from the place of religious worship. But, if on the contrary, all these obstacles are found to give way on such an occasion, I appeal to your own fair and impartial determination; if this should be suffered to debar you from the incomparably more exquisite and magnificent repast, prepared for you by the Lord of Glory, in his holy Temple? “Behold,” he now says to you by the lips of his ministers, in words similar to those employed by the servants, in the parable recorded, in the Gospel, “behold, I have prepared my dinner, come ye to the feast.” Yes, my friends! “all things are ready.” The Lamb is slain—the “Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world,” the Lamb,

destined to invigorate your souls, to fill them with consolation, to ravish them with delight, and to impart to them a foretaste of the happiness of the elect in God's everlasting kingdom. It is slain, it is about to be laid on the sacred table ; and you are all invited to partake of the celestial viand. Tell me then, my friends, whether you think it reasonable, that the same considerations, which would not be sufficient to induce you to forego the sensual gratifications of a convivial entertainment, should withhold you from the enjoyment, at least in spirit, of those incomparably more exalted pleasures, and substantial benefits, derived by the pious soul, from a worthy participation of that sacred banquet ; in which, to use the language of the church, " Christ himself is received, the memory of his passion is renewed, the mind is replenished with grace, and a pledge is given of future glory." No, my friends ! you cannot, I am convinced, be led to entertain so inconsistent an opinion. Should circumstances therefore, of the description above mentioned, suggest themselves to you as excuses for absenting yourselves from public worship, let them be fairly tried by this criterion, and let the question of their validity be decided accordingly.

The next incident specified in the Gospel, is that of the earnest and diligent search made by the holy Virgin and her venerable consort for their beloved child, when they perceived that he was not in their company ; a search, that termi-



nated at length, in their happy discovery of him in the temple of Jerusalem, to which they returned, when they had sought him ineffectually on the road among their friends and relatives. It may appear perhaps surprising, that these virtuous and excellent parents should have left Jerusalem, without a full assurance that their child was with them, and still more so, that they should not have been sensible of his absence, till an entire day had elapsed. All this however, my friends, may be reasonably accounted for, from the uniform tenor of conduct which they had previously witnessed in their divine Son. He was apprised, they well knew, of their intended departure, and the watchful attention which he had invariably paid to their motions, on all prior occasions, left them no room to doubt of a similar behaviour in the present juncture ; and consequently made them perfectly easy about him. But the long privation of the company of their dear child, to which they had not been hitherto accustomed, awakened, it is probable, in their breasts their parental apprehensions : and these apprehensions, unaccompanied with the slightest degree of suspicion of any neglect of duty on his part, urged them, it may be presumed, to retrace their steps to the holy city. Happy the parents who are blessed with children of virtuous dispositions, similar to those which pre-eminently distinguish the youthful Jesus ; happy the children who have the advantage of parents who are careful, by their co-operation

with the grace of heaven, to form such dispositions in their tender hearts. But let such parents at the same time remember, that however virtuous the dispositions of children may be, they fall far short of that perfection of holiness, which was exclusively characteristic of their divine model, and, cannot boast that character of stability, which was essentially inherent in *him*: let them remember, to speak in the language of the apostle, that the heavenly treasures which their beloved offspring may have the happiness to possess, are carried about in earthen vessels, the natural fragility of which, should induce every discreet and truly christian parent, to guard them with the most jealous and vigilant circumspection, against the numerous dangers to which they are exposed. Finally, let them remember, that that complete exemption from every principle of corruption, which was the high privilege of the immaculate Lamb of God, and which abundantly justified the most confident security of his earthly parents, respecting his moral character, is not granted to any of the rest of the descendants of Adam; and does not therefore release other parents from that prudent watchfulness over the highest interests of their progeny, which, as their natural guardians, they are conscientiously bounden to exercise. Be careful therefore, parents, not only to sow early principles of religion and virtue in the minds of your children, and “to bring them up” as the Apostle admonishes, “in the discipline and correction of

the Lord ;" (EPH. c. vi. v. 4.) but let it also be your constant study, by gentle admonitions, exhortations, and instructions, to foster and to cherish the good grain within them, to clear it from every noxious weed which you may perceive to be springing up, and to shelter it assiduously from the pestilential influence of the various sources of irreligion and immorality, which may blight it in its growth, and prevent it from bringing forth fruit in due season. Let every object calculated to taint their innocent minds with impure ideas, be removed from their sight ; let them be secured, as much as possible, against the baneful contagion of those "evil communications," which, as the Apostle observes, "corrupt good manners;" let no unseemly words, as far as it may depend on you, be suffered to meet their ears ; let no irreligious or licentious writings which may, in any manner, contribute to unsettle their orthodox principles, to sully their imaginations, or to inflame their passions, be placed within their reach ; And above all, let there be nothing in your own conduct to give offence to those dear little ones, whose edification it is in an especial manner your duty to promote. Remember the emphatic declaration of our blessed Saviour, that rather than offend *them*, "it were better that a mill stone were suspended from your necks, and that you were precipitated into the depth of the sea."

Thus far I have addressed myself to parents, and in the exemplary conduct of the Virgin Mo-



ther of Jesus, and of his reputed father, have presented them with an object highly worthy of their imitation. I am now about to address myself to children, and to them I have to recommend a still more perfect model. That model is no less a personage than the holy Jesus himself. Let me entreat you then, my dear children, to fix stedfastly your attention on that finished pattern of youthful excellence, delineated to you in this day's gospel. He was conducted, we are informed, by his parents to the temple of God in Jerusalem, there to join in the celebration of the Passover. Of the manner in which he there comported himself, the Gospel is silent. But the spirit of piety which invariably animated him during the course of his mortal life, and which occasionally burst forth in those admirable expressions of dévotional ardour recorded in holy writ, is abundantly sufficient to satisfy our curiosity on that subject. His thoughts were undoubtedly absorbed by the contemplation of that adorable Being in whose temple he was, and his affections corresponded with the lofty conceptions of his elevated mind. Be it your endeavour to imitate this divine model when you repair to the house of God, to present him with your tribute of religious homage. Remember that the great Being whom you are there called upon to adore, and praise, and thank, and supplicate, is the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth; that he authorises you nevertheless, to look up to him as your father, and that he has promised to give you whatever it

may be expedient for you to receive, provided you ask with becoming respect, attention, and earnestness. Think then, my dear children, think seriously on the awful character, and vast importance of the solemn act in which you are engaged. Let your thoughts accompany the words which you read in your prayer books, and let earnest desires to obtain what you ask accompany your thoughts. Prostrate yourselves in spirit with deep humility before the altar of God. Acknowledge his supreme dominion over you, and your entire dependence upon him. *Praise* him for the wonders of his incomprehensible power, wisdom, and goodness, which you see every where displayed. Thank him, oh! thank him, with the most lively feelings of gratitude, for the innumerable blessings which you daily receive from his bountiful hand. Implore with fervor his divine protection in behalf of yourselves, of your parents, relations, friends, and benefactors in particular, and of all mankind in general. Bewail with penitential sorrow the offences you may have had the misfortune to commit against so good a Father; promise faithfully not to offend him any more; Intreat him to pardon your past misdeeds; and resolve to devote the remainder of your lives to his holy service.

The evangelist closes the Gospel of this Sunday, by informing us that the blessed Jesus went down with his parents, and was subject to them, and that he increased in wisdom and age, and favor with God and men. Behold, my dear children



exemplified to you, in the conduct of your heavenly model, that dutiful submission and obedience to your parents, which every christian child should endeavour to copy. Do you endeavour to copy it? Do you, like the dutiful child Jesus, love, honor, reverence, and obey your parents? Then, like him, as you grow in age and stature, you will increase in wisdom, and with the good-will of men, you will be sure to obtain, what is of infinitely higher importance, the approbation of God.

## SERMON III.

### THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

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ON THE HAPPINESS OF A RELIGIOUS LIFE.

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GOSPEL. *St. John*, ii. v. 1-11. At that time, there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and his disciples, to the marriage. And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to him, They have no wine. And Jesus saith to her, Woman, what is it to me and to thee? my hour is not yet come. His mother saith to the waiters, Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye. Now there were set there six water-pots of stone, according to the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three measures a piece. Jesus saith to them, Fill the water-pots with water; and they filled them up to the brim. And Jesus saith to them, Draw out now, and carry to the chief steward of the feast; and they carried it. And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew who had drawn the water, the chief steward calleth the bridegroom, and saith to him, Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drank, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee; and manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

THE Gospel of this Sunday, exhibits to us our blessed Saviour in the cheerful character of a guest at a wedding feast, to which, with his disciples, he had been invited, and which was also honored with the presence of his Virgin Mother.

“ And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus also, and his disciples, were invited to the marriage.” During the entertainment, a circumstance occurred, which gave occasion to our blessed Saviour to display in his conduct that happy union of dignity and condescension, which is so graceful in persons of exalted rank, and has so powerful a tendency to render them objects of veneration and regard. The occurrence to which I allude, was the representation made to him by his Virgin Mother of the want of wine ; nor should we be surprised at her solicitude on that account, for wine, when used with temperance, must be allowed to contribute to the innocent festivity of the convivial board ; and, as the Psalmist informs us, was graciously imparted to man by his munificent Creator, “ to exhilarate his heart.” “ And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to him, they have no wine.” To this representation, Jesus returned the following reply. “ Woman, what is it to me and to thee ? My hour is not yet come.” If this reply appear to any one somewhat harsh, particularly as it was made by a son to his mother, and that mother too, as Mary unquestionably was, the paragon of her sex, let him consider attentively, not only the words employed by the blessed Virgin, but the view also with which she uttered them. The words used by the holy Virgin, were these, “ they have no wine.” The view, however, with which she

uttered them, was unquestionably this : that Jesus would, by the exercise of his supernatural power, supply the deficiency. Now, although the object which she had in contemplation, must certainly be confessed to have been of a laudable description, yet it is no disparagement to her to say, that she may have been mistaken in the measure to which she had recourse for the attainment of it. For by applying to Jesus to perform a miracle in order to furnish the guests with wine, which her representation of the failure of that article most assuredly implied, she may have been considered, perhaps, to have unwittingly interfered with him in the discharge of his ministerial functions ; and it may have been to indicate the impropriety of such interference on her part, that Jesus addressed her in the language of the sacred text ; “ Woman what is it to me and to thee ? my hour is not yet come.” Nor let it be imagined that the appellation of *woman* with which he accosted her, had anything in it contemptuous or disrespectful. For we learn from the Gospel of St. John, that he also made use of the same term, on an occasion when he gave her the most expressive proof of his filial piety and affection. The occasion to which I refer, was, that when beholding her standing near the cross, on which he was himself suspended, he recommended her so feelingly to the care and protection of the disciple whom he loved. “ *Woman*, behold thy son.” That the feelings of the blessed Virgin herself were not in



the slightest degree wounded by the mode of speech in which Jesus addressed her, that she was not even without expectation that the petition implied by her representation, would be ultimately successful, is pretty evident, from the directions which she gave to the waiters, to comply scrupulously with all his injunctions. "His mother saith to the waiters, whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye." Nor was she disappointed. For Jesus having asserted with becoming dignity the high and independent character of Son of God, with which he was invested, proceeded to manifest the sweet, amiable, and affectionate disposition of the Son of Mary, by accomplishing the object of her benevolent suggestion. For this purpose, he availed himself of a number of stone water-pots which were at hand, from which the Jews were accustomed to wash themselves before they entered upon their meals. These he ordered to be filled with water, and a sample of their contents to be then poured out, and taken to the steward of the feast. "Now there were set there six water-pots of stone, according to the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three measures apiece. Jesus saith to them, fill the water-pots with water; and they filled them up to the brim. And Jesus saith to them, draw out now, and carry to the chief steward of the feast: and they carried it."\* In the whole of this

\* And here, I think it not improper, as one instance among many others, of the evidence derived from the most

proceeding, there was no public manifestation of supernatural power. The waiters indeed, who had drawn the water, and who now perceived it converted into wine, could not be ignorant, that somehow or other a miracle had been performed. Whether they acted under an injunction of secrecy is unknown; but certain it is, that the chief steward of the feast had no knowledge whatsoever of the change which had been operated; since taking it for granted, that the wine which was now forthcoming, had been reserved by the bridegroom for the close of the entertainment; and finding it to be of a much superior quality, he rallied him on account of his preposterous conduct, in not producing it at an earlier period, when the palates of the guests were so much better qualified to appreciate its excellence. "And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and

minute circumstances in support of the truth of the Evangelical history, to lay before you the brief account which has been recently published by a very respectable traveller, of what he himself beheld on the very spot which was the theatre of the transaction recorded in this day's gospel. "The ruins of a church, says Dr. Clarke, are shewn in this place, which is said to have been erected over the spot where the marriage feast of Cana was held. It is worthy of remark, that walking among these ruins, we saw large massy stone water-pots, answering the description given of the ancient vessels of the country, not preserved and exhibited as relics, but lying about disregarded by the present inhabitants, with whose original use they were unacquainted. From their appearance, and the number of them, it was quite evident, that a practice of keeping water in large stone pots, each holding from eighteen to twenty-seven gallons, was once common in the country." (CLARKE'S TRAVELS, Tom. II. p. 445.)

knew not whence it was, (but the waiters knew, who had drawn the water,) the chief steward called the bridegroom, and saith to him, every man at first setteth down good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse : but thou hast kept the good wine until now." Nor does it appear improbable, that the rest of the guests, generally speaking, were unacquainted with the miracle ; since, although the Evangelist in the closing verse of the gospel, distinctly states it to have been his first miracle, and represents it as a manifestation of his supernatural power, yet as he plainly confines its moral influence to the effects which it produced on the minds of his disciples, it may fairly be inferred, that to *them* exclusively the miracle was made known. " This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory, and his *disciples* believed in him." Thus whilst he supported with corresponding elevation, his sublime character of Son of the Most High, did Jesus graciously manifest his attention to the feelings of his Virgin Mother, and to the wants of those for whom she pleaded ; And thus have I shewn, as I before asserted, that he displayed in his conduct that happy union of dignity and condescension, which is so graceful in persons of exalted rank, and has so powerful a tendency to render them objects of veneration and esteem.

Our blessed Saviour came into the world to instruct us by his example, as well as by his doctrine.



Now his example, as it is exhibited to us in this day's gospel, shews that the religion which he undertook to establish, is not that enemy to the enjoyments of life, which its adversaries sometimes represent it to be. For were such the character and genius of Christianity, its heavenly founder would never surely have sanctioned by his presence the pleasures of a wedding feast. Still less would he have contributed, by the performance of a miracle, to the promotion of its hilarity. We find indeed in the Gospel, Christianity itself compared to a wedding feast ; which seems to indicate, that hostility to cheerfulness, is not by any means in the number of its characteristics. Yes, my friends, the religion which you profess is a wedding feast. It is a feast which is the consequence of that mystic union so happily subsisting between Christ and his Church, and by which all who are regenerated and believe in him, become his children, who as the Evangelist expresses it, "are born not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God." (JOHN, *c. i. v. 13.*) And it is a feast of which the poor as well as the rich, are invited to partake. It does not indeed gratify the appetites of its guests with a profuse variety of earthly delicacies. But what is infinitely better, it regales them with that exquisite and heavenly food, of which our blessed Saviour spoke, when he said to his disciples "my meat is to do the will of him who sent me." (JOHN, *c. iv. v. 34.*) Such, my friends, is the food, of which as Christians, you are invited to



partake, and with which, if like your divine master, you nourish constantly your souls, I have no difficulty in declaring it to be my sincere conviction, that it will furnish them with the advantages of a continual feast. How in fact can it be otherwise? Since they whose meat, like that of their divine master, is to do the will of their father who is in heaven, who make, like him, the holy will of God, the invariable rule of their conduct, must necessarily possess within them, a never-failing source of satisfaction and delight. For such surely that internal principle of conformity to the will of their Creator must unquestionably be, which causes them to look upon all the various contingencies of life, as so many dispensations of his all-wise and bountiful providence. Without it, the rich are liable to be wretched; and with it, the poor can not fail to be happy. For instances are not wanting, of the most deplorable wretchedness in the midst of affluence. The unhappy state of their minds, or the habitual infirmities of their bodies, deprive sometimes the possessors of large fortunes of the power of enjoying them: and even, when that is not the case, a frequent repetition of the same pleasures, is apt to render them flat and insipid. But let that conformity to the will of God, which Christianity prescribes, be the ruling principle of the minds of men; let them, in compliance with its dictates, “seek first the kingdom of God and his justice,” and their wealth will become to them a real blessing. Not only will it

be the means of procuring for them the ordinary advantages which are derived from it, but it will also open to them other sources of exquisite enjoyment, of which, the selfish votaries of sensuality have no conception. Moreover, it will contribute to their attainment of that incomparably more exalted and permanent felicity, which the Almighty reserves in heaven for his faithful servants. Yes, my friends, the opulent, who in imitation of the example of their Divine Master, make the will of their heavenly Father, the constant rule of their conduct, are permitted in the first place, to derive from their riches, every desirable comfort which it is in the nature of riches to bestow. They say not indeed to their souls, like the rich fool in the gospel, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer." Nor is such in reality, the language of a reasonable being. But regarding their wealth, as the property of the Almighty sovereign of the universe, and themselves as his stewards, to whom they are accountable, they are directed invariably in the administration of it, by the instructions which he has delivered to them in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Hence, agreeably to those instructions, they neither hoard it avariciously, nor expend it prodigally : but equally removed from the opposite extremes of avarice and prodigality, they are careful in their use of it, ever to maintain that proper medium, which reason approves, and Christianity sanctions ; and which, whatever worldly-

minded sensualists may think, is the true seat of the most perfect enjoyment; whatever degree of splendour in the establishment of their household; whatever costliness in furniture and apparel; whatever conveniences, accommodations, and comforts; whatever provision for the settlement of their children, are suitable to the rank which they hold in society, are allowances conceded to them by their divine master. For it is by a due regard to all these circumstances, that the fortunes of the rich are rendered subservient to his providential designs. Since thus, like large rivers, they are made to flow through a variety of channels, into the departments of the industrious classes, furnishing them with employment, and contributing to their support.

Not only does Christianity, by its celestial influence on the minds of the affluent, contribute to the promotion of their earthly enjoyments in the way I have described; it enlarges moreover the sphere of their gratifications, by expanding their hearts, and stimulating their exertions to the diffusion of comfort and happiness around them. It prompts them to aid the efforts of the industrious, to comfort the afflicted, to relieve the distressed, and to distinguish themselves by their activity in the advancement of humane and charitable undertakings. Thus does it open to them the purest sources of delight in the indulgence of their own benevolent feelings, and in the consciousness of being objects of universal esteem: and thus too



in addition to every earthly blessing which it is in the power of riches to bestow, they have the satisfaction of thinking that they are rendering them conducive to their eternal interests; being informed by truth itself, that, "by making to themselves friends of the mammon of iniquity, they will be received by them, when they fail, into everlasting dwellings."

But in attempting to clear the character of Christianity from that melancholy gloom with which its enemies, by their misrepresentations, darken and disfigure it, am I not myself throwing around it a delusive glare, which is equally repugnant to its genuine spirit? How, it may be asked, is all that pomp, and splendour, and gratification which I have alleged consistent with the spirit of Christianity, to be reconciled with the doctrines of mortification and self-denial which we meet with so frequently in holy writ? How can those men be thought to deny themselves; to take up their cross and follow their divine master, which he peremptorily commanded his disciples to do, who are permitted to pass their days in luxury and ease? Far be it from me, my friends, to attempt to mitigate the severity of the gospel. Far be it from me, to endeavour to accommodate its strict morality to the corrupt inclinations of the human heart. Far be it from me, to pretend to dispense with the rigor of its precepts in favor of dignity, or rank, or opulence. I wish it on the contrary to be distinctly understood, that the injunctions



of mortification and of self-denial which the gospel prescribes, are general in their application, and that every individual without exception, however elevated his situation in life, is directed to observe them. But then, I contend that the observance of them is perfectly compatible with the decent proprieties of rank and station; for in the first place, it is to be remembered, that the mortification and self-denial which Christianity, though not solely, yet principally enjoins to its votaries, are the mortification of the passions, and the denial of our own wills. Now it is in the power of the great and opulent, by the assistance of heaven, to mortify their passions and to deny their own wills in the midst of all the pomp and pageantry with which they may be surrounded. They may keep down, by humility, the swellings of pride, check by temperance their sensual inclinations, repress by meekness the workings of anger, conquer by charity the malignity of envy, and subdue within them every other inordinate passion, by the assiduous cultivation of opposite habits. In the next place they may contrive, without much ingenuity, to practise in secret, and with a penitential spirit, a variety of mortifications, which the very circumstance of their secrecy, as we are informed by our blessed Saviour, will particularly recommend to the gracious acceptance of their Father who is in heaven. “But thou, when thou fastest anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father who is in secret ;

and thy Father who seeth in secret, will reward thee openly.”

Nor will that internal discipline, to which they may thus subject the affections of their hearts; and the penitential austerities which they may externally practise, be in reality hostile to their enjoyments. They will on the contrary, be highly favorable to them. For they will be the most effectual means of securing their minds against the assaults of those turbulent passions which are the enemies of their repose; and of establishing within them that serenity and composure, which, besides being in themselves the greatest of human blessings, are the best qualifications for the enjoyment of every other.

To the poor also, as well as to the rich, does religion communicate its exhilarating influence. Regarding their condition as allotted to them by him, the accomplishment of whose holy will is the grand object of their desires, they are contented with it. Viewing all the duties connected with that condition, as tasks imposed upon them by the same divine Being, they discharge them with alacrity. Considering the hardships which they may have to undergo, as the dispensations of his providence, they submit to them with cheerfulness. And thus, whilst others, in similar situations, who are destitute of religion, go sorrowing through life in dejection and melancholy, they derive from the happy dispositions of their minds, and from the bright prospect of those inexpressible joys, with which

they are assured their fidelity will be hereafter recompensed; a satisfaction and delight which prove to them experimentally the truth of the declaration of their Divine Master, when inviting all who labor and are heavily laden, to come to him and to take up his yoke, he emphatically avers, that "his yoke is sweet, and his burthen light. Whatever, in short, may be a man's condition in life, in whatever pursuits he may be engaged, or whatever contingencies may possibly befall him, he will not fail to experience from religion the most beneficial effects. For it is the property of that fundamental principle of religion, of making the will of God the rule of all his actions; to accommodate its cheering efficacy to every possible circumstance of his lot.

It will improve the joys of prosperity, by seasoning them with the pleasures of the devout affections: and, should those joys fail, as the wine did at the marriage feast of Cana, it will do that which may be assimilated to the miracle wrought by our Blessed Saviour on that memorable occasion; it will convert the sorrows of adversity into abundant sources of spiritual delight, instructing him, in the language of the Apostle St. James, "to count it all joy when he shall fall into divers temptations, for that, when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath prepared for them that love him." (JAMES, *c. i. v. 5.*) It will shield him against the shafts of human malignity, by the assurance of the approbation of the Most

High. By inspiring him with confidence in God's providential wisdom and goodness, it will free him from all disquieting cares, anxieties, and troubles: it will administer to him its soothing cordials of patience and resignation on the bed of sickness, and invigorate him amidst the struggles of agonizing nature with the opening prospect of a blissful immortality.

Since, therefore, my friends, it clearly appears that religion is not, as its enemies pretend, that decided foe to all the comforts and enjoyments of earth, since I have shewn it, on the contrary, to be the very *reverse*, let me exhort you to make it your constant friend and companion through life. It will brighten every period of your mortal existence, and will finally secure to you that "everlasting inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for you in heaven." (1 PETER, c. i.)



## SERMON IV.

### THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

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#### ON THE FAITH AND HUMILITY OF THE CENTURION.

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GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, viii. v. 1-13. At that time, when Jesus was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him; and behold a leper came and adored him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus stretching forth his hand, touched him, saying, I will, be thou made clean; and forthwith his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith to him, See thou tell no man; but go, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them. And when he had entered into Capharnaum, there came to him a centurion beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home, sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented. And Jesus saith to him, I will come and heal him. And the centurion making answer, said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man subject to authority, having under me soldiers; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doth it. And Jesus hearing this, marvelled; and said to them that followed him, Amen I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel. And I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven: but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said to the centurion, Go, and as thou hast believed so be it done to thee; and the servant was healed at the same hour.

THE Gospel of this Sunday furnishes us with an account of two splendid miracles, which display on the one hand, remarkable instances of a lively

faith in the individuals in whose favor they were performed, and which exhibit on the other hand, the power and dignity of the divine person who performed them, in the most lively colors. The first of these miracles was the cure of that malignant and loathsome disease called the leprosy. The man who was afflicted with it, must certainly be allowed to have given a striking proof of his faith in Jesus, by his respectful attitude, as well as by the terms in which he applied for relief. "And behold a leper came and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." For in what more expressive language could he convey his belief of the greatness of our Saviour's power, than by requiring no more than an act of his will for the removal of the disorder? "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." And when, on the other hand, we behold Jesus laying his hand upon him, and uttering at the same time his authoritative mandate for the distemper to depart, and see that mandate instantaneously obeyed, we are compelled to acknowledge the supernatural power and grandeur of deportment which our Saviour manifested on the occasion. "And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will, be thou made clean." At the same time his aversion to ostentation implied in his injunction of secrecy, and the respect which he evinced for the ordinances of religion, by enjoining the man whom he had cured of the leprosy, to shew himself to the priest, and to offer the gift which Moses had commanded, proved him to be

free from any of those interested and ambitious views observable in impostors, who, by their arrogant pretensions to superior illumination, and their contempt of the ceremonies of religious worship, seek to enhance their personal importance in the estimation of the multitude. “And Jesus saith to him, see thou tell no man, but go shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony to them.”

The other miracle related in the Gospel, is the cure of the servant of a Roman centurion, who was stricken with the palsy : and in this also, we shall have occasion to admire a not less conspicuous instance of extraordinary faith in the conduct of the centurion who applied to Jesus in behalf of his servant, and of the divine power and dignity of demeanour exhibited by Jesus, in graciously complying with his humble petition. “And when he had entered into Capharnaum, there came to him a centurion beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home, sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented.” Our blessed Saviour, to whom the secrets of hearts were known, saw distinctly the inward faith which animated the breast of this humble petitioner. But he wished it to be exposed outwardly to the view of the Jews, as a condemnation of their obstinate and perverse incredulity ; and therefore, instead of rewarding it immediately, as he intended ultimately to do, by acceding to his request, he returned him an answer, which he was sensible would have



the effect of bringing that faith to light, and of operating as a reproach to the children of Israel, on account of the unconquerable stubbornness of their unbelieving hearts. "And Jesus saith to him, I will come and heal him." This reply, as Jesus foresaw, most completely answered the purpose for which it was delivered. For it drew from the centurion a profession of his conviction of the sovereign majesty and omnipotence of Christ, the most expressive and significant that it is possible for human language to convey. Impressed on the one hand with the most elevated notions of the transcendent pre-eminence of Jesus, and penetrated on the other hand with a deep sense of his own comparative insignificance, he was overwhelmed with confusion at the idea of so great and exalted a personage condescending to enter the dwelling of an individual so infinitely beneath him, and therefore humbly requested, that he would only give the word of command, and that in obedience to it, his servant's disorder would, he well knew, immediately leave him. "And the centurion making answer, said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed." He then proceeded to unfold the sublime conception entertained by him of the power of Jesus, by comparing it with that, which he himself, though only a subordinate officer in the Roman army, was permitted to exercise. For since he, who in consequence of the rank which



he held, was subject to the authority of others, had only to issue his orders to those who were under his command, to be instantly obeyed ; since whithersoever he might direct them to march, or whatever task he might impose upon them, his mandate was executed without delay ; he naturally concluded, that Jesus, whom he acknowledged to be the supreme Lord of universal nature, and to whose absolute control, he consequently considered every distemper to which the human frame is exposed, to be subject, had nothing more to do for the restoration of the sick man's health, than to signify his pleasure to that effect. " For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me ; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth ; and to another, Come, and he cometh ; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." So illustrious an example of extraordinary faith in a Pagan soldier, produced, even in Jesus himself, an appearance at least of astonishment, and induced him to declare that he had not met with any thing of the sort equal to it among the chosen people of God, favored as they had been beyond the rest of mankind by a particular revelation of the counsels of the Most High. " And when Jesus heard this, he marvelled ; and said to them that followed him, Amen, I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel." But mark the awful and dignified terms in which he thence takes occasion to award with authority to the faithful heathens and to the unbelieving Jews, the happiness and misery of

their future destinies, and say, if it be credible, that any being less than God, that in particular the meek, the humble, the unassuming, the pious and holy Jesus, would have employed a language so characteristic of the Divinity, had he not actually possessed in his person the entire plenitude of the Godhead. “And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven : but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Having thus afforded the virtuous centurion an opportunity of manifesting the energy of his faith, he then proceeded with that unaffected simplicity, so characteristic of one to whom the most stupendous prodigies are not less familiar than the most ordinary events, to accomplish the object of his petition, by restoring his servant to health. “And Jesus said to the centurion, Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee ; and the servant was healed at that hour.”

How happened it, that, as we read in the gospel, a Roman centurion believed Jesus to be a delegate from heaven, whilst the scribes and pharisees, with the great bulk of the Jewish people, rejected him as an impostor ? Had the former any evidence of the divinity of his mission, which the latter did not possess ? And if not, to what are we to attribute the opposite sentiments entertained in his regard ? No, my friends, the centurion had no

advantage whatsoever over the Jews in the superiority of evidence which was communicated to him. Both the one and the other were alike apprized of the stupendous miracles which he was known to have performed, far exceeding the natural ability of any human being. But the opposite opinions which they were induced to form of the character of our blessed Saviour, proceeded from the opposite dispositions of mind with which they contemplated those miracles. The Jews, influenced by their prejudices and passions, ascribed the powers more than human, which he evidently displayed, and which it was not possible for them to deny, to the power of the devil: whilst the Roman centurion, being a sincere, honest, upright man, saw clearly, in the purity of our Lord's doctrine, and the unblemished sanctity of his life, incontestible proofs of the celestial origin of his supernatural power. Although he had been trained up in the principles of Paganism, and had no other light to direct him than that of nature, yet his ingenuous mind yielded without resistance to the force of evidence, which the doctrines, the miracles, and the conduct of our blessed Saviour exhibited. Whilst the Jews, to whom Jesus was first and principally sent, who from their infancy were instructed in the Holy Scriptures, which contained such plain and explicit promises of the Messiah, and who expected, moreover, his arrival among them about that period, suffered themselves to be blinded to such a degree



by their prejudices and passions, that all the combined influence of the sanctity of his life, of the excellence of his doctrine, and of the astonishing prodigies which he wrought among them, was insufficient to conquer their obstinate incredulity. His doctrine was a condemnation of their false maxims, and his life did not coincide with their erroneous notions of sanctity. He taught, that habits of internal holiness, and not a mere punctilious compliance with external forms, recommended men to the favor of heaven. He conversed too, forsooth, with publicans and sinners, and had even the impiety, in their estimation, to perform works of mercy on the sabbath day. Hence, they persuaded themselves that it was impossible he should have derived a commission from above. In vain did he feed thousands with a small quantity of provisions. In vain did he expel diseases by his word. In vain did he cause the graves to deliver up their dead. In vain did he compel the winds and waves to obey his voice. In vain did he extort even from evil spirits an explicit confession of his divinity. To all this they replied ; “ But is not this the carpenter’s son ? Does he not eat and drink with publicans and sinners ? Does he not even violate the sabbath, by curing the sick, and commanding them to carry their beds on that sacred day ? ” Such were the objections which they opposed to the splendid miracles of Jesus, and to the universal voice of nature bearing testimony to him.



The centurion, on the other hand, unbiassed by any of these unreasonable prejudices, attends impartially to the evidence of facts. He had heard of Jesus; heard of his unblemished life, his heavenly doctrines, his numerous and astonishing miracles; had heard them confirmed by testimony which no ingenuous mind could resist. He immediately surrenders himself to such convincing evidence: and so far from requiring, as the Jews of that day continually did, and as modern infidels do at present, additional and stronger proofs, he seems, on the contrary, afraid of shewing the slightest distrust of our Saviour's power. He declares his belief that he was able to perform a miracle at any distance, and entreats him not to give himself the trouble of coming to his house in person, but to say only the word, and his servant should be healed.

Such, my friends, is the disposition of mind which it becomes us also particularly to cultivate. That freedom from self-sufficiency, and pride, and prejudice of every kind; that honest simplicity and integrity of heart, which is open to conviction, and receives without resistance the sacred impressions of truth. It is the want of this disposition, and not the want of sufficient evidence, that is the real cause of infidelity now, as it was anciently among the Jews. It is this principle, operating in different ways, which now imputes to fraud and collusion those miracles, which the Jews ascribed to the agency of Beelzebub; which now rejects all human testimony, as it formerly did even the perceptions of sense.

It is not, however, to be dissembled, that there are also persons of a character widely different from that, both of the ancient Jews and of modern infidels already mentioned ; persons, whose dispositions are candid, honest, and sincere, who anxiously wish to know the truth, and are prepared to embrace it when known ; but whose misfortune rather than fault, it has been, to have been so encompassed with clouds of prejudice, from causes over which they had no control, as to have become in a manner incapable of discerning it. The persons to whom I allude, constitute, I am disposed to think, a very numerous class of respectable individuals in this country, who possessing many estimable and virtuous qualities, reject nevertheless the doctrines of the Catholic Church, and conscientiously hold themselves in a state of separation from its religious communion. Nor shall we be surprised at this, when we consider with what sedulity, prepossessions the most hostile to the Catholic Religion, have at an early period of life been instilled into their minds ; in what odious and disgusting colors it has been constantly depicted to their deluded fancies, and how industriously the impressions which have been thence derived, have been corroborated and confirmed by a variety of other means ; by publications from the press, declamations from the pulpit, and tales of slander calculated to its disparagement. Hence have they been induced erroneously to suppose that its doctrines are absurd, its worship idolatrous,

its practices superstitious, its spirit sanguinary, and its maxims immoral. But could they only be persuaded to institute a calm and dispassionate enquiry into its intrinsic merits, could they be prevailed upon to learn its real character, from those who must be presumed to be best acquainted with it, they would find it, I will venture to say, to be in every respect the very reverse of those foul and odious misrepresentations, by which it has been so monstrously and unjustly disfigured. Its doctrines they would perceive to be heavenly, its worship sublime, its practices holy, its spirit mild, its maxims replete with the most pure morality. They would observe in the number of its devoted adherents a long catalogue of distinguished characters, who have been shining models of every Christian virtue; and they would acknowledge it in the end to be as deserving of admiration for its sanctity, as it is venerable for its antiquity.

Another remarkable feature in the character of the centurion is his profound humility. How completely this most amiable of Christian virtues had taken possession of his soul, is evident from the manner in which he solicited our Blessed Saviour in behalf of his servant. "Lord, said he, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, but speak only the word, and my servant shall be healed." This lowliness of mind in a Roman centurion is the more remarkable, because humility, in the Gospel sense of the word, is a virtue with which the Romans were totally unac-



quainted. They had not even a term in their language to convey an idea of it. The word *humilita* occurs, it is true, in classical authors. But then it is employed in a very different acceptation from that in which it is used in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For in the Gospel of Jesus Christ it denotes that mild, gentle, unassuming, and inoffensive frame of mind which was so conspicuous in the person of its Divine Author. But, in the profane writers of ancient Rome, it is meant to express whatever is low, mean, and contemptible. A haughty, imperious, and over-bearing temper, a high opinion of their own virtue and wisdom, a contempt of all other nations but their own, a quick sense, and a keen resentment not only of injuries, but even the slightest affronts; such was the favorite and predominant character among the Romans: and that gentleness of disposition, that low estimation of our own merits, that ready preference of others to ourselves, that fearfulness of giving offence, that abasement of ourselves in the sight of God, which *we* call humility, *they* consider as the mark of a mean, abject, and unmanly mind. When, therefore, we see this virtuous centurion differing so widely from his countrymen in this respect, we may certainly conclude, that his notions of morality were of a much higher standard than theirs; and that his disposition peculiarly fitted him for the reception of the Gospel. For, humility is that virtue, which more than any other, disposes the mind to yield to the evidences, and to



embrace the doctrines of the Christian revelation. It is that virtue which the gospel was peculiarly meant to produce, on which it lays the greatest stress, and in which, perhaps, more than any other consists the true essence and vital principle of the Christian temper. We therefore, find the strongest exhortations to it in almost every page of the Gospel.

“I say to all among you,” says St. Paul, “not to be more wise than becometh to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety.” (Rom. c. xii. v. 3.) “Mind not high things,” the same Apostle exhorts, “but condescend to the humble : Be not wise in your own conceits.” “Blessed are the meek,” exclaimed our divine Saviour, “for they shall possess the land.” “Whosoever shall humble himself as a little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” “Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart.” Such, my friends, and many more, are the passages in holy writ, in which humility is recommended as peculiarly characteristic of every true disciple of Jesus Christ.

Let it be your endeavour therefore, my Christian friends, to imitate those two excellent qualities of faith and humility which shone forth so conspicuously in the character of the Centurion. Let faith prompt you to reject without hesitation, every suggestion which the pride of human reason may possibly oppose to the revelations of the Most High : and let humility make you sensible of your own demerits, and cause you to refer whatever ex-

cellence may be in you, to the great Author of every good and perfect gift. Thus, whilst the incredulous and arrogant votaries of a false philosophy, who obstinately resist the evidence of the Gospel, "shall be cast into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," it will be your happy lot to "sit down with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

## SERMON V.

### THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

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#### ON AFFLICTIONS.

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GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, viii. v. 23-27. At that time, when Jesus entered into the ship, his disciples followed him; and behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves, but he was asleep. And they came to him, and awaked him, saying, Lord, save us, we perish. And Jesus saith to them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then rising up, he commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm. But the men wondered, saying, What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey him?

THE storm which is related in this day's gospel to have excited such consternation in the minds of the disciples, who had followed their Divine Master into a ship on the lake of Genesareth, may fairly be considered as a figurative representation of the afflictions and troubles to which his followers are liable to be exposed on the tempestuous ocean of the world. "And when he entered into a ship his disciples followed him; and behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the ship was covered with the waves." To the repose to which Jesus is stated to have consigned himself amidst the impending dangers which threatened *them* with destruction, may be assimilated in like manner

that slumbering indifference, with which the Almighty may appear to regard the sufferings of his servants in this their present probationary state. "But he was asleep." And, as the terms in which the former gave vent to their feelings, indicated a want of sufficient confidence in the protection of him who was present with them, "Lord save us, we perish;" so the language of the latter, in similar circumstances, is apt sometimes to betray a secret distrust of the providential care of that Great Being, who, though invisible to the human eye, is always in the midst of men. But, as Jesus upbraided his disciples with the deficiency of their faith, for allowing themselves to be intimidated whilst he was with them, so the same reproach is applicable to Christians of every age and country, who, unmindful of the assurance of divine protection proclaimed so frequently in the sacred Scriptures, abandon themselves in their troubles to the most distressing disquietudes and alarms. "Why do you fear, O ye of little faith?" To guard you against such discouraging and fruitless apprehensions, it shall be my endeavour, this day, in discoursing to you on the subject of afflictions, to reconcile your minds to them, by an exposition of the advantages which may be derived from them.

That the life of man is embittered with troubles and misfortunes of various kinds, no one, I presume, will hesitate to acknowledge. At every period of time, in every part of the globe, and from individuals of every state and condition in



life, have the cries and lamentations of misery been heard. To teach the art of bearing these afflictions with fortitude, was the great boast of the ancient philosophers. Vain and impotent attempt! They could suggest no other motives than those which reason supplies. But in the hour of distress, reason is powerless. It is from religion alone that we can derive consolation and relief. Listen then to the voice of religion, all ye whom afflictions of any description may have possibly befallen, whether it be your lot to endure the hardships of poverty, to languish under infirmities, to suffer any of those sad reverses of fortune, from which the most opulent can claim no exemption, to be aspersed in your characters by the misrepresentations of slander, or, what to the sensibility of a feeling heart, is painful beyond every other earthly misfortune, to bewail the loss of some dear object of your tenderest affection; listen to the doctrine of the great apostle St. Paul: "Moreover we have had fathers of our flesh, who corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much more obey the father of spirits, and live? And they indeed, for a few days, chastised according to their own pleasure; but he, for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastisement seemeth to bring with it joy, but sorrow; but afterwards it will yield to them who have been exercised by it, the most peaceable fruit of justice." (HEB. c. xii. v. 9-11.) If, therefore, as the Apostle observes, the chastise-

ments which children occasionally receive from their earthly parents, do not extinguish in their breasts the natural sentiments of filial respect and reverence towards them, much less should the troubles, hardships, and distresses, inflicted by our father who is in heaven, beget in us a refractory disposition to his divine appointments. They indeed are only to be called fathers in a more confined acceptation of the term. But he is in truth our father. He is the author of our being, the source and support of our existence, and "in him we live, move, and are." They are weak and fallible creatures, and as such, are subject to mistakes, and liable to be influenced in the distribution of their punishments, by the blind impulse of prejudice, caprice, and passion. But he is the father of lights, and is therefore perfectly acquainted with all our infirmities, together with the remedies by which they may be healed. He is also at the same time a God of mercy, and of all consolation, and consequently can be actuated by no other view in his treatment of us, than the promotion of our best and dearest interests. And although the remedies, which, in his wisdom, he may apply, should be somewhat painful to the feelings of flesh and blood, yet we may rest assured that they are well adapted to the constitution of our nature, and that they tend to establish within us that healthful vigor of soul, which is the surest pledge of a blissful immortality. It is evident therefore from the doctrine of St. Paul,

that the afflictions and troubles with which it may please the Almighty to visit you, far from being instances of his cruelty or severity, are to be regarded on the contrary as signal proofs of his paternal affection. And this doctrine of the inspired Apostle will be still more clearly and fully illustrated, if we reflect attentively on the nature and circumstances of our present state.

The world which at present we inhabit is not in its nature, nor was it ever designed to be, a region of complete content and happiness. No! It is a place of exile from our true country, of temporary sequestration from that everlasting felicity to which originally we were destined, but to which we had forfeited every title by the prevarication of our common parent. It is a strange land, in which we are taught to consider ourselves as pilgrims and travellers proceeding forward in our journey to our true country. It is a state of trial, of discipline, and of exercise, in which we are permitted to remain for a time, in order that we may be trained in the practice of virtues, and acquire habits which may fit us for the society of the elect of God. We can not, however, be ignorant, that we are prompted by our inordinate and corrupt propensities to contract our views within the narrow compass of our banished state; to catch with avidity at every transient and delusive pleasure which may present itself to our view in our passage to eternity. Nor is it to be denied that in our eagerness to enjoy the comforts of this



life, we are apt to lose sight of our present condition, to forget that we are no more than travellers upon earth, that we are fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the family of God, and that instead of pursuing steadily our journey to the heavenly land of promise, we are disposed to sit down in the desert of the world, and to rest satisfied with the enjoyments which it affords, regardless of the permanent and infinitely more exalted blessings prepared for us at our journey's end, in the blissful mansions of our heavenly Father. We can not moreover but be sensible that the fascinating blandishments of earthly objects, which are every where displayed around us, give additional strength to the depraved inclinations of the corrupt principle which we harbour in our breast. Urged then, as impetuously we are, to the gratification of our sensual appetites, to the utter exclusion of all anxiety and concern respecting our eternal destiny, can we reasonably complain of the conduct of the Almighty, when he adopts such measures in our regard as naturally tend to check the impetuosity of our passions, and to prevent us from being seduced by the false and deceitful charms of earthly vanities? This he does, when, with not less bounty than wisdom, he suffers us to be afflicted with temporal calamities. For who does not know how naturally that glowing ardor, with which the breasts of men are wont to be animated in the pursuit of terrestrial advantages, is damped by misfortunes? How flat and insipid to the enervated sensualist are all those variegated



scenes of dissipation, those luxurious banquets, those festivities and amusements, which in the season of health and jollity, occupied perpetually his thoughts, when the anguish of pain or the languor of disease deprive him of the powers of enjoyment? How quickly disappears all that fallacious lustre of worldly glory, which dazzles to such a degree the eyes of men, and captivates their hearts in the hour of uninterrupted prosperity, when failure in the accomplishment of their ambitious enterprises, sinks them at once into insignificance and contempt! How easily are they convinced of the vanity of that close and ardent attachment, with which, under the smiles of propitious fortune, they cleaved so fondly to the perishable riches of the earth, when they find themselves reduced to a state of penury and want. Or what sublunary object has any attraction for the disconsolate widow, when he, in whom her affections centered, is torn from her embraces, and consigned to the tomb? In these melancholy moments of distress and sadness, when nothing upon earth is capable of giving pleasure, or administering consolation, how open is the heart of man to the free ingress of the graces of heaven! How susceptible is it of religious impressions! How sensible of the emptiness of terrestrial advantages! How readily do its affections soar aloft, and seek repose in the bosom of the Eternal, when they are no longer enchained to creatures by the ignoble bonds of worldly attachment! And when

it has become convinced by woful, but salutary experience, of the inconstancy of earthly happiness, how willingly is it induced to cultivate the friendship of him, in whom there is not even a shadow of change, and whose munificence is enlarged, as his constancy is unalterable! Far therefore from considering afflictions as marks of God's displeasure, or instances of his severity, we should contemplate them, on the contrary, as so many gracious manifestations of his parental kindness; we should view them in the light of affectionate admonitions feelingly addressed to our hearts, by the best of Fathers, unveiling to our minds the unsubstantial nature of earthly vanities, despoiling them of their false glosses, convincing us of the unreasonableness of our extravagant adherence to them, kindling in our breasts a desire, and stimulating us to the pursuit of those pure, solid, and permanent enjoyments, which alone are worthy of beings created for immortality, and capable of satisfying their boundless appetites.

Permit me also, my friends, to call your attention to your past lives. Pass in review the series of years which have succeeded the first dawn of your opening reason to the present hour. What kind of spectacle does the serious retrospect bring back to your view? Will it stand the test of that sacred code of laws promulgated by the divine founder of the Christian religion for the regulation of your conduct? Will it bear to be scrutinized by the maxims and precepts inculcated

in it? Will it be found in every respect conformable to the spirit of that holy dispensation? Alas! my friends, is there one among my present hearers who has preserved unsullied that precious robe of innocence with which he was clothed at the baptismal font? Where, where is the man, who on a close and impartial examination of his past conduct, will not discover in it abundant matter of reproach and condemnation? To what base and abominable purposes do not the generality of Christians too frequently prostitute the noblest faculties of their being? How often is reason, like some dethroned and greatly injured monarch, shamefully degraded into the ignominious slave of rebellious and unruly passions, of avarice, ambition, or lust, and rendered subservient to the prosecution of their unjust and lawless purposes? To what a multitude of foul and scandalous enormities, does not the tyrannic sway of these usurpers, frequently drive their miserable slaves! But are not such disorders, outrageous insults to the Majesty of heaven? Are they not of a nature to provoke the anger of the Almighty? Must they not be confessed to be deserving of the severest punishment? How many thousands are this moment suffering the most excruciating torments in the regions of despair and misery for similar transgressions? Might not sinners, therefore, who are still permitted to live, notwithstanding the multitude and heinousness of their crimes, for which, if they were dealt with according to their deserts,



they would be condemned to die eternally, and who, by the respite granted them, are still furnished with an opportunity of deprecating God's avenging justice, and of being restored once more to his favor, ought not they, I say, however hard or painful may be their lot on earth, still to regard themselves as objects of the special clemency of heaven? Instead of betraying the slightest symptoms of fretfulness or impatience under their afflictions and troubles, ought they not on the contrary, to submit to them with gratitude, as a very light and inadequate compensation for the punishments, incomparably more rigorous and dreadful, which impartial justice has a right to exact? Do criminals convicted of capital offences, and who have forfeited in consequence their lives to the violated laws of their country, conceive themselves treated with severity, do they murmur or complain, when, in lieu of death, which their crimes have merited, the mitigated penalty of fine, exile, imprisonment, or any other inferior punishment is assigned them by the gracious exercise of the royal prerogative? And what comparison is there between temporal and eternal death? What comparison between the privation of a few years of earthly existence, and perpetual seclusion from the society of the blessed? What comparison between the temporary pangs which accompany the violent separation of the body from its kindred spirit, and the extreme anguish of the soul engulfed for eternity in that un-



fathomable abyss of torments, where no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth? Oh! my friends, with what transports of joy would those unfortunate victims of wretchedness and desperation, who are now groaning in the regions of woe under the weight of divine indignation, with what raptures of exultation would they consent to sustain the utmost rigors of earthly calamity, could they but upon that condition, be rescued from the evils of their present state? Shall sinners then, who live only by a special favor of the Almighty, who breathe only upon sufferance, who, on the perpetration of the first crime which gave a mortal wound to their souls, deserved to be plunged into the gulph of perdition, and who, since that period, have been accumulating perhaps guilt upon guilt, and adding fresh aggravations to their multiplied enormities,—shall they, convicted and punishable culprits, repine at the lenient and temporary chastisements of relenting mercy, at a time when they are obnoxious to the rigorous and eternal vengeance of inexorable justice?

But although among Christians there are unquestionably but too many who come under the denomination of those grievous offenders whom I have just described, yet I am unwilling to include my present hearers in this black catalogue of criminals. It is to be remembered nevertheless that there are also failings of a less heinous description, which, without amounting to a degree of turpitude destructive of the spiritual life of the

soul, tarnish its purity, and render it obnoxious to the divine displeasure. Examine impartially your hearts, my friends, and say if no blemishes of this character be discoverable in them. Will you not, on a fair and unbiassed investigation, have too much reason to lament the contrary? Have you always, for instance, been careful to check the wild roavings of licentious fancy? Have you constantly exercised a becoming vigilance over your senses? Have you used your best endeavours to stifle in their birth the first emotions of anger and impatience? Have you never failed to banish from your minds every rash and uncharitable thought which may have sprung up within them, injurious to the honor and reputation of your neighbour? Has your conversation been at all times tempered with that placid meekness, that gentleness and humility which characterize the true disciples of him who was meek and humble of heart? Does no asperity of language ever escape you; does no peevish, censorious, or ill-natured expression, the result perhaps of inconsiderate thoughtlessness, rather than of rooted malignity, wound the feelings of your friends and associates? Has no fear of reprehension prevailed upon you occasionally to violate the truth? Has not even the value of the very best of your actions been sometimes depreciated by the base alloy of self-complacency and vain glory? Are you conscious of no neglect in discharging the duties of your respective stations? As a father, mother, husband, wife,

child, master, servant, have you always acted your part with religious fidelity? Remember that it is a principle of our holy religion that nothing defiled can enter heaven; that guilt of every description and degree subjects the offender to a proportionate allotment of punishment, and that if that punishment be not endured by him in his present state of probation, it will be inflicted on him hereafter, in a future state of suffering and purgation. This then being the case, should not they who are sensible of having in any manner fallen short of the strict requisitions of the gospel, embrace with heartfelt cheerfulness the crosses and tribulations of this short life, as so many gracious dispensations of mercy, substituted in the place of far more painful torments, which otherwise they would have to undergo beyond the grave, in the mournful regions—though not of endless, yet of long perhaps, and possibly of very intense affliction.

But I will suppose you to have been preserved by the special protection of the Almighty from even the slightest violation of the precepts of the gospel. I will suppose you to have attained a degree of sanctity which it has been given to the most eminent alone among the servants of God to reach. Still are you not to consider the afflictions which you may be doomed to experience, in any other light than as distinguishing marks of the favor of the Most High. For by them he furnishes you with a fit opportunity of exercising a variety of illustrious virtues which would not



otherwise be brought into action, and the exercise of which will entitle you to high distinction in the court of heaven. Unshaken fidelity, steady resolution, unruffled meekness, invincible patience, cheerful resignation, persevering constancy, such are the great and admirable virtues which the servants of God have an opportunity of displaying in their conflicts with afflictions, and such the proudest honors of the court of heaven are destined hereafter to remunerate.

Look into the lives of the most renowned personages whose names are recorded in holy writ, and you will find throughout, the most illustrious among them to have derived splendour from the furnace of affliction. Abel, victim of a brother's envy ; Abraham, expatriated sojourner in a strange land ; Jacob fleeing from before the face of Esau ; Joseph enslaved, calumniated, imprisoned ; Moses, amidst the horrors of a dreary wilderness, assailed by the murmurs, complaints, and provocations of a perverse and ungrateful race ; David, object of the unjust persecution of a jealous prince, and of the still more unnatural conspiracy of a rebellious child. Such, my friends, are the worthies exhibited to us in the Old Testament, as peculiarly deserving our admiration and esteem. In perusing the New, we discover afflictions to have been the lot of those who shine forth in it with the brightest lustre. And the divine founder of our holy religion is represented to us by the Apostle of the Gentiles, as having been advanced to that



high degree of exaltation, which at present he possesses at the right hand of his Eternal Father, and having acquired a name which is above every other name, by the humiliations and sufferings of his mortal life. Shall Christians, then, with so many great and substantial advantages of afflictions before their eyes, with so many splendid and encouraging examples proposed to their imitation, abandon themselves in the hour of distress and trouble to disquietude and dejection? Shall they not rather embrace them like St. Paul, with alacrity and thankfulness? Oh! contemplate that glorious and blissful reversion reserved for you in a future state. Think on that resplendent crown, that uninterrupted repose, those ineffable and everlasting joys which will succeed ere long the vexations, fatigues, and troubles of this transient life. Remember that it is written, “that if you sow in sorrow, you shall hereafter reap in joy;” “that if you suffer with Christ, you shall reign also with him;” and “that the tribulations of this present time, light and momentary, work for you above measure exceedingly, an eternal weight of glory.”

## SERMON VI.

### THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

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ON THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND TARES.

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GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, xiii. v. 24-30. At that time, Jesus spoke this parable to the multitudes: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field. But while men were asleep, his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way. And when the blade was sprung up, and had brought forth fruit, then appeared also the cockle. And the servants of the goodman of the house coming, said to him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? whence then hath it cockle? And he said to them, An enemy hath done this. And the servants said to him, Wilt thou that we go and gather it up? And he said, No, lest perhaps gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it. Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn.

IN the parable of this day's Gospel, the kingdom of heaven, or the conduct of Christ in the economy of his Church diffused throughout the world, is assimilated to that of a man who had sown his field with wheat; among which an enemy, taking advantage of a favorable opportunity which presented itself for his purpose, when the husbandmen, to whose care the field was committed, were asleep, disseminated a species of noxious weeds, in the

original termed ζιζανια, and in the English language usually translated tares, although very different from the produce known at present by that name. Our tares, besides, being easily distinguished from wheat, are of great use to cattle, whereas the parable under consideration implies a vegetable production of a prejudicial description, and which can not, without difficulty, be distinguished from the corn, till both have arrived at an advanced stage in their growth. Having premised thus much respecting the nature of the plant sown by the enemy among the wheat, I shall continue, in conformity with common usage, to express it by the word tares, and proceed immediately to the consideration of the parable. As the application of this parable to the object which it was intended to elucidate, has been made by our blessed Saviour himself, I can not, I think, do better, than present you with the exposition of it which he has given. The man, according to that exposition, who soweth the good seed, is the Son of Man, (an appellation which Christ was accustomed to assume, as one of his characteristic titles.) The field in which he deposits the seed is denominated the world; The seed itself are the children of the kingdom; that is, they are the faithful subjects of Christ's spiritual kingdom, who with sound principles of doctrine unite the sanctity of exemplary conduct. The tares, on the other hand, are represented to be the children of the wicked one, by whom are to be understood all those persons, who professing



themselves members of the true church of Christ, dishonor it by their irregular and disorderly lives; or others, who being in a state of separation from it, reject with obstinacy the doctrines it inculcates. By the enemy who sows the tares is meant the devil, that irreconcilable enemy of God and man, of God's glory and of man's salvation. The harvest is stated to be the end of the world, or that great day of general retribution, when the angels of God, whom the reapers mentioned in the parable are designed to represent, will separate the wicked from the just, as tares from the wheat, and cast the former into that unextinguishable fire, where they shall burn for ever without being consumed; whilst the latter, gathered like wheat into the barn, will be preserved for ever in the rich storehouse of God's everlasting kingdom. Such, my friends, in substance, is the interpretation which our blessed Saviour has graciously condescended to leave us of this parable, which forms this day's Gospel. But there is one circumstance, as perhaps you may have remarked, which he has omitted to explain; and that is the application made by the servants to their master for permission to root up the tares from his field. By these servants are obviously to be understood those among the disciples of Christ, who actuated by an honest, though mistaken zeal in the cause of their Divine Master, would willingly have recourse to violent and coercive measures, for the effectual extermination of error and vice. "And the servants



said to him, wilt thou that we go and gather them up?" The answer in the negative given by the master to this application, should be considered as a clear and decisive disapprobation, delivered by Christ himself, of the use of external force for the destruction of the enemies of truth and virtue. "And he said, No : lest, while you gather up the tares, you root up the wheat also together with them." This reply, however, of our blessed Saviour, though distinct and positive, is, it is to be observed, at the same time perfectly calm and gentle, unaccompanied with violent or reproachful language, indicating feelings of indignation or displeasure at the proposal of the question, because he may be thought to have viewed it as the result of an error in the understanding rather than of any malignity of heart. And hence, perhaps, may his omission to interpret this part of the parable be accounted for ; since having said sufficient under the cover of the parable to discountenance the error, he may have allowed the veil to remain over it, lest its removal by an undisguised interpretation, might expose to uncharitable animadversions, the characters of those, by whom it should be conscientiously maintained.

Having thus expounded the parable to you, in conformity with the explanation which Christ himself has given of it, I will now endeavour to develope to you the important lesson which it was designed to inculcate. The object which the parable has principally in view, appears to be a

vindication of the providence of heaven, in tolerating error and wickedness upon the earth. It begins by informing us that the good seed, the seminal principles of truth and virtue, is sown in our hearts by Jesus Christ ; and hence, we should be deterred from assuming any merit whatsoever to ourselves, on account of any virtues which we may have the happiness to possess, since they do not shoot up spontaneously from germs which are naturally inherent in us, but owe entirely their existence to that divine seed which the Son of God has sown in our souls. From the consideration of the true and real source of every moral excellence, we are conducted by the parable to the contemplation of a subject of not less importance, and that is the origin of moral evil. Whence, under the administration of that great Being, who is infinitely powerful and infinitely good, could moral evil have possibly arisen ? This is a question which has baffled all the efforts of the wise and of the learned in every age, and continues to bid defiance to the utmost exertions of the human intellect. But the short answer given in the parable to this momentous question, though it may not be level to the comprehension of man, should preclude the prosecution of further research on this mysterious subject. "An enemy hath done this," says the parable ; "And that enemy is the Devil," adds Jesus Christ. That is sufficient. Truth itself has spoken. And whatever difficulty after this may suggest itself to the mind, should

be laid to the account of the weakness of its powers, not to any defect in the validity of the solution.

Having imparted to us these lofty communications respecting the origin of good and evil, the parable at length proceeds to deliver a most important admonition on the line of conduct which it becomes the disciples of Christ to pursue towards those, who under the denomination of tares, reject the doctrines, or infringe the precepts, of his holy religion, and to assign a motive in justification of it. "And the servants said, wilt thou that we go and gather them up? And he said, no, lest while ye gather up the tares, you root up the wheat also together with it." Influenced by an honest, though mistaken zeal for the interests of their Divine Master, the servants of Jesus Christ, like those in the parable, have sometimes manifested a similar disposition. Nor is that all. They have actually resorted to deeds of violence to accomplish what they conceived to be a blessed object. And a blessed object it must be acknowledged to have been. For such assuredly is the extirpation of error and of vice. But the means to which they have had recourse for the attainment of that object, are not to be justified. It is not by the infliction of corporal punishment that men are to be reclaimed from their errors and their vices. No. It is by instruction, by admonition, by persuasion, by good example, by prayer, and all those mild and endearing offices which the



gospel prescribes, and charity inspires. Unhappily, however, a due sense of these only proper and legitimate means of rooting up tares from the field of the Lord, has not always been impressed on the minds of the votaries of Christianity; and men of every religious persuasion under heaven have rashly combated the enemies of the spirit with the arms of the flesh. Yes. Let us be candid. Men of every religious denomination have persecuted in their turn. And when Protestants reproach Catholics with the scenes of blood which were exhibited in this country in the reign of Mary, the latter may, with as much reason, retaliate on the former, deeds, of at least equal, if not greater, atrocity, which disgraced the administration of her less virtuous sister. But the fact is, neither the one, nor the other, are just subjects of mutual recrimination. For why should persons of any religious denomination be made accountable for the errors of their ancestors? Nor do I ever think that those ancestors themselves, should be the objects of such severe and indignant animadversions as they usually are. The acts indeed were unquestionably shocking to the feelings of humanity, and as such, they cannot be too rigorously condemned. But the motives of those who were the authors of them, may have been honest; and in yielding to them, they may have obeyed reluctantly the imperious mandates of an erroneous conscience. How far, if at all, they were culpable in the formation of that erroneous conscience, is



a question which at present we are not competent to decide. It is a question which He only who searcheth the reins and heart, is qualified to determine. Before His awful tribunal they have long since been summoned to take their trial. And the sentence of the judge has been pronounced upon them, which has sealed their doom for ever. What that sentence has been, we know not. But the day will arrive, when it will be published in the face of the universe. Till that period, let us suspend our judgments, be silent, and adore. The deeds, however, stand in a very different predicament. They are facts, which are too well attested to admit of a doubt. They are recorded in the page of history in characters of blood. There let them remain, shut up like the intolerant question of the servants in the parable, which Christ omitted to bring forward in his interpretation of it. Yes, let them there remain as subjects of private reflection in our closets. Let them remain as beacons, to point out to us the fatal rocks against which our forefathers have unhappily split, and to warn their descendants against steering a similar course. But in the name of the living God, in the name of the God of peace and charity, let them not be officiously dragged forth from their quiet recess, and diabolically converted into torches of discord, to light up the flames of religious animosity among the children of men.

To return to the parable, the master having forbidden his servants to root up the tares, assigns

as the ground of this prohibition, the danger to which the wheat would be unavoidably exposed, of being eradicated with them. "No," said he, "lest while you gather up the tares, you root up the wheat also together with them." Although our blessed Saviour, as I have already observed, has not given an explanation of this part of the parable, yet by the parable itself, he has intimated with sufficient evidence, that the reason for which he forbade his disciples to extirpate by violence the enemies of his religion, was the apprehension he entertained that the just would be sometimes involved, by that measure, in the fate of the wicked. Such in reality, my friends, is the general weakness, ignorance, and depravity of human nature in its present corrupt state, that men not unfrequently are apt to mistake truth for error, and innocence for guilt. Whatever is contrary to their own particular system of religious belief, they denominate error; and whatever in practice does not coincide with their own notions of godliness, they regard as vicious. But their system of religious belief, and their notions of godliness, may have no other foundation, than that of prejudice, and in that case, were they to employ force for the extirpation of those whom they are induced to consider as the enemies of truth and virtue, their efforts would be directed against the friends, instead of the enemies, both of the one and of the other. And thus would they root up the wheat instead of the tares from the field of the Lord.

Of the truth of this observation, there are innumerable examples upon record. They were these false and unjust prepossessions which caused the Scribes and Pharisees to view even the blessed Jesus himself as a teacher of falsehood, a violator of the sabbath, an impostor and blasphemer, and as such to condemn him to a cruel and ignominious death. These prompted the Apostle Paul, before his conversion to the faith of Christ, to counteract, with all the energies of his soul, the propagation of that religion, of which he afterwards became the most active promoter, and most able advocate. These, as our blessed Saviour had foretold, instigated the Jewish zealots in the first age of Christianity to persecute its adherents. "Yea, the hour cometh," said Christ to his Apostles, "that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth a service to God." These, in short, have armed the fanatics of every age, against whatever in religion is most sacred and venerable. The slaughter of priests, the subversion of altars, the destruction of religious edifices, have been the dreadful consequences of misguided zeal, acting under the influence of these baneful prepossessions.—But I will suppose they were not liable to these mental delusions, which might occasion them to mistake truth for error, and virtue for vice ; I will suppose that their destructive efforts were never directed against any other persons than such as were in reality objects of the divine displeasure, still would the extirpation of them, oftentimes prove injurious

to God's faithful servants. For are not the interests of the ungodly and of the righteous frequently blended together in such a manner, that the destruction of the one, would inevitably cause the ruin of the other? May not an impious and profligate husband be wedded to a pious and virtuous wife, whose comfort and support may depend upon his existence? May not a worthless and unprincipled father be blessed with a family of innocent children, who would be left by his death in a deplorable state of want and wretchedness? May not the most wicked and abandoned of men, be in a variety of ways, so connected with individuals of unblemished character, as to plunge them by his fall into the deepest distress? Well then may the servants in the parable have been cautioned by their master not to gather up the tares, lest they should root up the wheat together with them. And well may Christ have intimated by it to his followers the important lesson of restraining their hands from violence against the opposers of his doctrines, and the transgressors of his laws, lest his faithful adherents might be implicated in their punishment.

There are other reasons moreover, for which the Divine founder of the Christian religion may have prohibited recourse to violence for the extermination of its enemies. He may wish to employ them as instruments of his justice, for the chastisement of sinners, or as instruments of his mercy, for the advantage of the just. So general and exor-



bitant are sometimes the crimes of guilty nations, as to demand an extraordinary interposition of the Almighty, to support the authority of his moral laws in the government of the universe. This extraordinary interposition he then displayed in a most awful manner, when, because all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth, he overwhelmed the world with the waters of the deluge. This he also did, when, on account of the iniquities of their infamous inhabitants, he destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha. But he sometimes employs the wicked as ministers of his wrath, to execute vengeance on incorrigible offenders. Such were all the various armies of pagan idolators, of Assyrians, Babylonians, Syrians, Romans, who, at different periods were sent against the chosen people of God, who laid waste their country with fire and sword, led the inhabitants into captivity, demolished at length their temple and their city, and scattered the survivors of this last fatal catastrophe among the nations of the earth, where they still continue, after the long lapse of 1800 years, existing monuments of the judgments of God, visiting the sins of the fathers on their children from generation to generation. Not only the punishment of sinners, but the benefit of the virtuous, may also have been an object for which the Saviour of the world may have directed his disciples not to exercise violence against the opposers of his doctrines or the violators of his laws. He may have wished them to be tolerated, to furnish

his chosen servants with opportunities of testifying the firmness of their faith, and to bring into action a variety of virtues which they would not otherwise have occasion to display. "For there must be also heresies," says St. Paul, "that they also who are approved, may be manifest among you." (1. COR. *c. xi. v. 19.*) And "blessed are you," says Jesus Christ "when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you untruly, for my sake; be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." (MATT. *c. viii. v. 12.*) But there is yet another reason for which our blessed Saviour may have delivered this specific injunction. He may have been actuated by views of mercy towards those very persons, whom, under the denomination of tares, he ordered them to spare. For although tares cannot naturally be converted into wheat, yet, the supernatural virtue of God's all-powerful grace, is capable of transforming the most abandoned of sinners into the greatest saints. Of this we have, among many others, a most striking instance in the conversion of St. Paul, who from a sanguinary persecutor of the Christian Religion, was changed, by the efficacy of the grace of heaven, into a most intrepid champion and promoter of its interests.

Such then, my friends, being the tolerant spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, let us cherish and cultivate it to the utmost of our abilities. Let not the scene of prosperous and triumphant wick-

edness, which, not unfrequently presents itself to our view, deter the just from perseverance in virtue, or embolden the wicked in their career of crime. Let both remember, the former for their consolation, the latter with a view to their reformation and amendment, that the time of harvest, the great day of final retribution, will at length arrive, when the Son of Man shall send his Angels, like the reapers in the parable, "who shall gather out of his kingdom all scandals and them that work iniquity, and cast them into the furnace of fire, (where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth) and that the just shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (MATT. c. xiii. v. 41, 42, 43.) Then will every appearance of disorder be removed for ever from the works of God. Then will his ways to man be completely justified. Then will it be clearly demonstrated to the world, that, in the language of the poet,

" All discord 's harmony, not understood ;  
All partial evil, universal good."

Then, in the inspired words of the psalmist, will it be evidently seen and confessed, that "the Lord is just in all his ways, and holy in all his works." How far that awful period may be distant from us, we know not. Thus much, however, we know, that to each individual amongst us the coming of the Lord is an event which is fast approaching, and that it will determine his lot for ever. Let us then, my friends, in compliance with the ad-

monition of the parable, guard with all diligence those portions of the field of the Lord committed to our care, against the attempts of the enemy to sow in them his pernicious tares. "And blessed," says our divine Saviour, "are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching. Amen, I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing he will minister to them." (LUKE, *c. xii. v. 37.*)



## SERMON VII.

### THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

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ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY.

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GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, xiii. v. 31-35. At that time, Jesus spoke this parable to the multitudes: The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sewed in his field; which is the least indeed of all seeds: but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come, and dwell in the branches thereof. Another parable he spoke to them: The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened. All these things Jesus spoke in parables to the multitudes, and without parables he did not speak to them; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.

By the kingdom of heaven, mentioned in this day's Gospel, is to be understood the Christian religion: And it is assimilated to the grain of mustard seed, and to leaven, in the two parables which you have heard read, on account of the astonishing rapidity of its growth, and extent of its propagation, from an origin so apparently mean and inconsiderable. It is to the consideration of Christianity, exhibited to you in these points of view, that I purpose this day to call your attention: and never surely did this subject, important at all

times, more urgently demand it than at the present day. Other ages have witnessed the corruption of its doctrines, the violation of its precepts, the relaxation of its discipline, the invasion of its liberties and rights; but, never since that early period of Christianity, when, as the royal psalmist had emphatically predicted, “the Gentiles raged, and the people devised vain things; when the kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together against the Lord, and against his anointed,”—never, since that early period of persecution and of blood, has the Church of Christ experienced so formidable an attack as the present times. The ridicule of profane wit, the perplexing sophistry of the sceptic, the impious declamations of the professed infidel, the licentious passions of the libertine, opposed, alas too feebly! by the prevailing indifference of believers themselves; all conspire, with unceasing ardour, to the accomplishment of its destruction. And the pride of human reason, and the lust of insatiable appetite, re-assuming their pretended rights, and wishing, as it were, to be revenged on the laws themselves, by the salutary restraint of which they have so long been held in subjection, bite with indignant fury the curb which checks their wild impetuosity; and in the words of the psalmist may be conceived to exclaim, “let us break their bonds asunder, and let us cast from us their yoke.” But in vain. “For he who dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them, and the Lord shall mock them to scorn.” For the

Lord has declared, that *his* reign shall be eternal, “and the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever.” But although the Almighty has himself pledged his word that his Church shall never fail, yet he has not made the same promise concerning any individual amongst us. He has declared on the contrary, that the time shall come, when the constancy of even his elect shall be put to a severe trial. In order, therefore, that you may be enabled to resist with fortitude, and to repel with vigor, the audacious assaults of the enemies of your religion, it is my intention to furnish you this day with an invincible argument in support of its divine origin, from the consideration of the marvellous rapidity of its growth, and the extent of its propagation, by which it realized in so astonishing a manner the two parables of this day’s gospel.

That no effect can possibly be produced without an adequate cause, no one, I presume, will be so unreasonable as to deny. On this principle then, my friends, I now take my stand. On this principle I will proceed to consider the rapid growth and extensive propagation of the Christian religion.

When the apostles were sent by Christ to diffuse abroad the light of his Gospel, the whole world, with the exception of Judea, lay blindly immersed in the shades of idolatry ; a religion which added to the awe inspired by the sacredness of its character, all the attractive charms of pleasing tenet,

pompous worship, and indulgent morality. Imaginary beings of supernatural influence, were distributed over the universe. Mountains and vallies, fountains and rivers, groves and plains, all had their tutelary protectors, all their Gods; and the works of the artist, like those of nature, were hallowed, as was imagined, by the peculiar presence of their respective deities. To them were attributed the passions of men; and the voluptuous immortals, like the frail inhabitants of earth, were supposed to delight in sensual gratifications. Such, my friends, in part, was the system of pagan theology, a system evidently calculated, through the avenues of the imagination and the senses, to take possession of the human heart.

That the gods might be honored in a manner suitable to their supposed dignity, temples of magnificent structure were erected; and the talents of the most eminent artists were called forth to decorate them with the master-pieces of their art. Arrayed in sacred ornaments stood the awful minister of religion, and immolated, with solemn pomp, the victim destined for sacrifice. The young and the beautiful of either sex, crowned with flowers, and clothed in robes of whitest hue, enlivened, by their attendance, the solemnity of the spectacle. The magistrates of the state, accompanied with all the insignia of their dignity, gave to the ceremony additional lustre. The air was filled with perfumes, breathing odours of choicest fragrance. It resounded with the melodious harmony



of voice and instrument, which conspired to form the most transporting concerts. The pomp of sacrifice was succeeded by dances, games, and convivial festivities.

Agreeable to the tenets and mode of worship of this religion, was the morality which it inculcated: a morality not repressive of the passions, but indulgent and flattering to them. Those disorders, to which the corruption of the human heart experiences, unfortunately, so strong a propensity, were not only tolerated, they were, in some measure, recommended. They were authorized and consecrated by the example of the gods. A variety of other circumstances contributed also to the support of this religion, in itself so engaging. It had been imbibed by its infatuated votaries with the earliest principles of education. They considered it as an old and precious inheritance, transmitted to them by their venerable ancestors. They conceived their own happiness to be linked with it. Their republics and empires had been erected on its basis. It was so dear to them, that in its defence they exerted more pertinacious efforts than for their lives and fortunes. So ancient was this religion, that, unable to trace it to its origin, they imagined it to be coeval with the foundation of the world, and the gods themselves to have been its authors. It united the suffrages of ages and of nations. The great statesmen of antiquity, whose laws we still admire, philosophers, orators, historians, poets, all the most distinguished ge-

niuses of Greece and Rome, whose writings are at this day regarded as models of taste and elegance, all bowed down before the statues of the gods, and assembled with the plebeian crowd to chaunt their praises. Rome was thought to have been informed by Jupiter himself, that she should one day become the empress of nations ; and a rapid succession of victories appeared to justify the prediction of the god. These prejudices, which the circumstances already mentioned conspired to establish, in favor of the heathenish worship, derived additional strength from the persuasion which prevailed, that the power of the gods had frequently been manifested in behalf of their worshippers. The temples abounded with inscriptions, attesting the acknowledgments of grateful votaries for received favors ; and history, unfaithful to her charge, nourished the blind credulity of the multitude, by recounting prodigies which they were said to have performed. Surely, my friends, it must be allowed, that a religion like that of which I have just given you an imperfect sketch, could not be subverted but by the most extraordinary means !

Such however was the religion, on the ruins of which was projected the establishment of Christianity ; a religion, which to those to whom it was first announced, must have presented, one would think, a repulsive rather than an attractive aspect. It was new, and therefore did not seem to possess that awful character of sacredness which antiquity stamps on all its works. Its doctrine being of a

mysterious nature, dark and incomprehensible, was offensive to the pride of human reason. It derived not any adventitious lustre from its external pomp of worship. For the Christian religion was not then, as it is at present, (with all due respect for prevailing discipline be it spoken) it was not then recommended to the senses by the attractions of music, the parade of ceremony, or the decorations of art. It was plain, simple, and unadorned. Nor was there any thing in its moral code which favored the inordinate inclinations of corrupt nature. Though holy, it was severe; and, notwithstanding its admirable tendency to reform and improve the human heart, it had to encounter a violent opposition from the feelings of flesh and blood, the irregular motions of which it was intended to restrain. Can any enterprise be conceived more difficult of execution than that of substituting a religion, attended with disadvantages so numerous and discouraging, in the place of one, to which so many favorable circumstances conspired to afford security against every species of assault. Yet this was the enterprise which the Apostles undertook to execute, and that too on so extensive a scale as to give it the appearance of being altogether chimerical. For it was not confined to a single town, or province, or nation. It was circumscribed by no other boundaries than those of the whole world. In vain did obstacles present themselves to their view. Neither the intemperature of climates, the inclemency of sea-



sons, the asperity of mountains, the burning sands of the desert, or the dangers of the sea, could shake their constancy, or damp their ardor. The habitual antipathies of rival nations, the jealousies of conflicting interests, the prejudices arising from diversity of sentiments, manners, customs, all the discordant principles which agitate the human breast, and excite contention, animosity, and disorder among men; ambition, envy, anger, resentment, all were to be melted down by the pure ethereal flame of Christian charity, and from elements apparently the most jarring and incoherent, was to be formed a society of men, embracing the same system of doctrine, regulated by the same code of moral precepts, and animated by one and the same Holy Spirit. Neither these, however, nor any other considerations, could deter them from their bold and arduous undertaking.

Had a project of so vast and marvellous a description been proposed to be executed at an early period of society, when the mind, unseduced by the delusions of false science, and unbiassed by prejudice, retained in great measure its primeval simplicity, and the heart was yet unpolluted by the corrupt refinements of sensual gratification, its success, though even in that case highly improbable, might be conceived at least to be possible. But the period chosen for its execution was diametrically the reverse. It was distinguished on the contrary by the highest cultivation of the human mind, and the most profound corruption



of the human heart. It was pre-eminently the era of science and of vice, of elegance and libertinism ; and the writings still extant of the most celebrated authors, who flourished at the memorable epoch of which I speak, are standing monuments both of the polished and depraved state of the age in which they lived. Can any plan be conceived more impracticable, than that of prevailing on men accustomed to reason and enquire, to embrace, with all the simplicity of children, a doctrine which it was not given to them to comprehend, and of persuading them to subject their corrupt inclinations, which hitherto they had laid under no restraint, to the severe discipline of the Christian law ?

Who then were these Apostles, who could entertain expectations of success in an undertaking apparently so inconsistent with every view of human prudence ? What uncommon resources did they possess ? What means had they at their disposal to enable them to remove so many obstacles which stood in their way ? Were they endowed with extraordinary talents ? Had they received from nature the gift of persuasion in a superior degree ? Did they trust to artifice and intrigue for a prosperous issue of their undertaking ? Had they riches to seduce, authority to command, or force to compel ? None of these things, my friends, fell to the lot of the first propagators of the Christian religion. “ For see your vocation, brethren,” exclaims the great Saint

Paul, "that there are not many wise, according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble: But the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and things that are not, that he might bring to nought things that are." (1 Cor. c. i. v. 26-28.) Such then my friends, were the men who undertook to proclaim to the world the saving doctrine of the crucified Jesus, "to the Jews a stumbling block, to the Gentiles foolishness." They were of the lowest class of the people, poor, illiterate, simple, incapable of deceit, and far from receiving any external succour or support. They were thwarted on the contrary by every species of opposition. Calumny, ridicule, sophistry, violence, whatever the most insidious artifice could suggest, malice could invent, or cruelty inflict, was employed against them. Scarcely had the Christian religion been announced to the world, when the inhabitants of nations arose as one man to accomplish its destruction. In their zeal to extirpate an institution so adverse to all their prejudices and inclinations, they seemed to have divested themselves of their natural feelings, and to have forgotten that they were men. Punishments hitherto unheard of, were inflicted by them on teachers and on proselytes. They assumed a form of atrocity, at the description only of which,

human nature stands aghast. Every instrument of torture which the most barbarous policy could devise, was resorted to, for the purpose of subduing the stubborn resolution of such daring innovators. To enter into particulars would shock the least delicate humanity. Such ferocity, though attested by undoubted evidence, appears almost incredible. No age, no sex, no condition, was spared. Destruction was indiscriminately let loose on all who assumed the name of Christian. Not a voice was raised in their defence; not a tear was shed to compassionate their woes. Hearts, which even the deserved fate of suffering malefactors could move to pity, remained callous to every impression, from the cruel and unjust treatment of peaceful and virtuous Christians. Every sentiment of social, or even human, sympathy was stifled in their regard. Their blood was demanded with clamorous importunity. It flowed in copious streams, whilst the most indecent shouts of savage joy accompanied its effusion. So implacable and ferocious was their fury, that, not content with the inhuman punishments inflicted on them when living, they sometimes vented their wanton and barbarous rage on their remains, after death. Assailed by so formidable a league of foes, and destitute of every visible protection and support, what prospect of success, by any human means, could a few ignorant men, of low birth, poor, despised, and defenceless, be induced to entertain.



Great, nevertheless, brilliant and unparalleled was their success. They propagated their doctrine with the most astonishing rapidity, and vast multitudes, not only in Judea, but in almost every country of the known world, were, in a short time, persuaded to embrace it. And the crucified Jesus, "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles, foolishness," appeared evidently in the event to be, as St. Paul sublimely expresses it, "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Nations which had never known the Roman yoke, were found to yield a voluntary submission to the laws of the Gospel; and already did the kingdom of Christ, even in its infancy, spread beyond the extensive dominion of the Cæsars. In vain were the most vigorous and artful efforts exerted to destroy it. Firm and impregnable, it resisted triumphantly every attack. The heroic patience of the suffering Apostles was superior to the fury of their enraged enemies. They exulted in torments, which they deemed to be ennobled by the glorious cause in which they were sustained. "They rejoiced," says St. Luke, "that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." (ACTS c. v. v. 41.) All the implements of cruelty employed by their adversaries to overcome their fortitude, were, in their eyes, the instruments of their triumphs; and considering death as the termination of their afflictions, and the end of all their labors, they hailed it as the happiest event which could befall them. But the accomplishment of their



vast design was not thus to be frustrated. The work which they had left unfinished, their surviving disciples continued to carry on. Like them, they were reviled, persecuted, tormented; and, like them, they endured with unshaken constancy the most violent attempts of their adversaries. Against that divine panoply, the armour of faith, all the darts of the most wicked one fell innocuous to the ground. Nor threats could intimidate them, nor dangers appal them, nor promises seduce them, nor obstacles discourage them. No, nor could all the terrific apparatus of ingenious atrocity in any degree affect the unalterable purposes of their determined souls. Through labors and difficulties, through tribulations and distress, through persecutions and torments, they pursued undaunted their successful career; and even death itself, that fatal principle of destruction to all human societies, was to the Christian community a source of increase. For the blood of the martyrs, to use the well known expression of Tertullian, was the seed of the Church.

The shades of idolatry disappeared rapidly before the progressive light of the Gospel. Then, as the prophet Isaiah had foretold, "arising and enlightened, did the new Jerusalem lift up her eyes round about, and see the Gentiles walking in her light, and the kings in the brightness of her rising. Then did she behold multitudes gathered together, and coming to her; her sons coming from afar, and her daughters rising up at her

side ; then did she see and abound, and her heart wondered and was enlarged, when the multitude of the sea was converted to her, when the strength of the Gentiles came to her." (ISAIAH c. lx. v. 3, 4, 5.) The deserted temple, the prostrate idol, the failing sacrifice, the silent oracle, all at length bore testimony to the reluctant flight of error, and to the triumphant cause of truth. Three centuries of persecution and of blood were closed by the conversion of the world to Christianity,—and when, at a somewhat later period, the most astonishing revolutions took place, when swarms of Northern barbarians, issuing forth from their Scandinavian hives, overran the Roman empire, and levelled at length to the ground that mighty colossus, which comprised within its enormous stride so large a portion of the globe ;—when, out of its ruins arose other states, which experienced in their turns the common lot of all human things ;—in a word, when the most violent convulsions shook to their foundations the perishable establishments of men, and laid them in the dust,—thy immortal fabric, O Divine Jesus ! the stupendous work of thine impenetrable wisdom, unaffected by the general wreck of falling empires and states, remained firm and immoveable. Still unimpaired does it continue to rear majestic its venerable front ; and though all the powers of darkness should conspire, with the malice of their earthly agents, to accomplish its destruction, superior to their united efforts,

and in defiance of all their fruitless assaults, it will continue to stand to the end of time, a lasting monument of the power, wisdom, and mercy of its Almighty Founder.

Had Christianity in its rise and progress met with every kind of protection and favor, and had the first propagators of it, been men of transcendent talents, still must it be allowed, that a revolution of so marvellous a nature, as that which I have described, in religion, manners, laws, customs, prejudices, opinions, sentiments, could not but be considered as highly wonderful. As, therefore, it was brought about in direct opposition to every obstacle which could possibly be thrown in its way, and that too by instruments naturally unqualified for so vast an undertaking, what conclusion are we to draw, unless it be this, that over it, that over the vast undertaking, presided an Almighty Being, invisible to the human eye, girding the weak with strength, removing obstacles from before them, and disposing all things with infinite wisdom, to the accomplishment of his own original design?

The religion then, my friends, to which you have been called, is indubitably divine. You are convinced it is so. Comfort yourselves, therefore, in a manner worthy of so sublime a calling. Let the consciousness of your dignity as Christians, as members of that august body of which Christ Jesus is the head, animate you to sustain with corres-



ponding propriety so exalted a character. Let it fortify your resolution against the assaults of incredulity, and stimulate you to fight manfully the battles of the Lord. But let the ardour of your zeal in the cause of God be tempered at the same time with charity to your fellow-men. Listen to the admonition of St. Paul to the Corinthians upon this subject, who, after having addressed them in the following terms, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, do manfully and be strengthened," immediately added, "let all your things be done with charity." (1 COR. c. xvi. v. 13, 14.) Let it not, moreover, be forgotten, that the Christian religion is not merely a system of speculative belief, but that it is also a grand scheme of practical morality; that although "without faith it is impossible to please God," yet, "faith without works is inanimate, dead, unavailing; that besides having your loins girt about with truth, you must also have on the breast-plate of justice." Suffer not the pride of corrupt nature to conceal from your view the true, though humiliating, prospect of your natural infirmity. Remember that you are men, weak men, constantly in danger of falling, and by your own strength unable again to rise. That the all-powerful arm of the Almighty is necessary to raise you up, and to support your feeble limbs; that his celestial aid is not to be obtained but by prayer; and that, therefore, you should have recourse to prayer in order to procure it. Pray then to him, that



strengthened by his supernatural succour, you may be enabled to discharge with fidelity all the various duties which religion enjoins, and thus be qualified to receive hereafter, through the infinite merits of his beloved son, that incomprehensible reward, which is promised to the observers of his holy law.

## SERMON VIII.

## SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

## ON THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD.

GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, xx. v. 1-16. At that time, Jesus spoke to his disciples this parable : The kingdom of heaven is like to a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And having agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour, he saw others standing in the market-place idle, and he said to them, Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just ; and they went their way. And again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did in like manner. But about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing ; and he saith to them, Why stand you here all the day idle ? They said to him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith to them, Go you also into my vineyard. And when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward, Call the labourers and pay them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first. When therefore they were come, that came about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first also came, they thought that they should receive more ; and they also received every man a penny. And receiving it, they murmured against the master of the house, saying, These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us that have borne the burden of the day and the heats. But he answering said to one of them, Friend, I do thee no wrong ; didst thou not agree with me for a penny ? Take what is thine, and go thy way ; I will also give to this last even as to thee. Or, is it not lawful for me to do what I will ? is thy eye evil, because I am good ? So shall the last be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen.

By the kingdom of heaven mentioned in this day's Gospel, is to be understood the visible Church of God on earth, or that aggregate collection of

individuals, to whom supernatural communications of the designs and ordinances of God have at different periods been imparted from above. And the conduct of God in the government of that kingdom, is assimilated to that of a householder engaging labourers to work in his vineyard at various hours of the day, and paying them at the close of it their stipulated wages. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard." The persons alluded to in the Gospel who were engaged early in the morning, and at the third, sixth, and ninth hours, I conceive to have been the Jewish people, who by their early vocation to the service of God in the person of the Patriarch Abraham, who was the father of their race, and afterwards by the promulgation of the law on mount Sinai, by the disclosures, and promises made to them by their prophets, and finally by the preaching of Christ and his apostles, may be said to have been hired at the corresponding hours specified in the parable. "And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and he said to them: Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just; and they went their way. And again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did in like manner." By those who were engaged to work in the vineyard at the eleventh hour, I appre-

hend the Gentiles to have been pointed out, when, on account of the obstinate resistance of the Jews, the Apostles devoted themselves, with the most astonishing success, to the conversion of the former to the faith of Christ; and this is the more probable, because Christ himself distinctly designated them as labourers in his vineyard, when, as we read in another parable, reported in the 12th chapter of St. Mark, he said, "what therefore will the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy those husbandmen, and give the vineyard to others." (MARK, c. xii. v. 9.) "But about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing; and he saith to them, Why stand you here all the day idle? They say to him, because no man hath hired us. He saith to them, go you also into my vineyard." The wages allotted in the evening to the different labourers were the privileges and benefits of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which, without distinction between Jew and Gentile, were conferred alike on all, who, by the integrity of their faith, and by a corresponding tenor of conduct, may be said to have laboured with fidelity in the spiritual vineyard to which they had been sent. "And when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward, call the labourers and pay them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first." The complaint made by the first set of workmen, who are stated to have murmured at the distribution of equal remunerations among persons whose fatigues and exertions had



been so very unequal, is a striking representation of the marked dissatisfaction so frequently expressed by the Jews at the participation of the Gentiles in all the blessings of the new covenant, which they erroneously imagined to have been exclusively reserved for themselves. "When therefore they were come, that came about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first also came, they thought that they should have received more, and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they received it, they murmured against the master of the house, saying, these last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us that have borne the burden of the day and the heats." The reply made to the murmurers by the master of the vineyard, is strongly expressive of that fundamental article of the Christian religion, that the spiritual blessings which it is given to the disciples of Christ to enjoy, are not to be considered as the result of their own meritorious exertions, but as the unmerited and gratuitous effects of the special mercy of indulgent Heaven. "But he answered one of them, and said; Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine, and go thy way; I will also give to this last even as to thee. Or, is it not lawful for me to do what I will? is thine eye evil, because I am good?" And finally, the circumstance of the payment having been first made to those who were last called, is emblematical of the prior vocation of the Gentiles

in a body, to the faith of Christ, as that of its having been last made to those who were first engaged, is figurative of the future vocation of the Jews to the same faith, which will take place hereafter, when, as the apostle, speaking upon this subject, observes, “the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in.” (ROM. c. xi. v. 25.) Hence does our blessed Saviour, having concluded the parable, add to it these remarkable words, with which the Gospel terminates, “so shall the last be first, and the first last, for many are called, but few are chosen.” In which he not only indicates the prior vocation of the Gentiles in a body, but assigns also the reason of that priority, which he clearly intimates to be the smallness of the number of the Jewish people who could be prevailed upon to embrace his heavenly doctrine when it was delivered to them. They were all indeed *called* to the faith of Christ, but such was the perversity of that infatuated nation, that few were regarded to be fit objects of the divine mercy, in being *chosen* members of his holy religion. “For many are called but few are chosen.” Such, my friends, I believe to be the real meaning of that celebrated passage, which has been so frightfully distorted by Calvin and his followers, and construed by them into absolute and unconditional decrees of God, respecting the eternal destinies of every individual of the human race; than which no doctrine can be conceived more monstrous in itself, more inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God,

or more baneful to the comfort and happiness of man, and against which it becomes every teacher of morality and religion, every sincere advocate of the cause of God, and every friend to the interests of humanity, to enter, as I do at the present moment, his most solemn protest.

Having thus expounded to you what I humbly conceive to be the true meaning and import of the parable which constitutes the subject of this day's gospel, I will now proceed to apply it to the circumstances of your several conditions, in order to render it subservient to your spiritual advantage. Like the labourers in the gospel, all, whose ears the glad tidings of the Gospel have reached, are called by it to work in the vineyard of the Lord. But it unfortunately happens, that many, deluded by the false light of presumptuous reason, or influenced perhaps by the corrupt bias of their sensual inclinations, obstinately reject the gracious overtures thus made to them by the master of the vineyard. Others again there are, (and would to God the number were not great,) others I say, there are, who, acceding to the proposals of the master of the vineyard at the various hours at which they are called, engage to toil assiduously in his service to the close of the day, but who are not careful to fulfil their engagements. The individuals to whom I allude, are they whose minds at different periods of their lives, having been deeply impressed with a lively sense of the importance of salvation offered to them by the sovereign



Lord of heaven and of earth, as the price of their faithful exertions in his service, have been induced to close with him on the terms proposed, but are negligent on their part in their compliance with them. The terms proposed to them, and which they, on their part, have pledged themselves to observe, are a subjection of their understandings to the obedience of Christ, and a conformity of their conduct with the rules which he has prescribed. But in one, or both of these respects, they are frequently found to be deplorably deficient. Their minds are alienated from the purity of his doctrines, and their lives at variance with the sanctity of his precepts. And here, my friends, let me entreat you to look with an impartial eye into the state of your own consciences, and to examine carefully if one or both of these predicaments be not perhaps in some measure your own. Consider then, in the first place, if your faith be genuine; if it embrace the entire collection of truths, which the Divine Author of your holy religion has commanded you to believe, as an indispensable condition to the attainment of the salary with which he has promised to reward hereafter your fidelity in his service, at the close of the day of your mortal lives, if it be not in any degree contaminated with the base alloy of error; if it be that faith, which, as St. Jude expresses it, was once delivered to the saints; if it be that faith which Jesus himself taught, which the Apostles propagated, for which the martyrs bled, and for



which its heroic champions have contended with firm and unshaken intrepidity, in every country and in every age, from the dawn of Christianity to the present hour. These circumstances, my friends, demand your most serious and attentive consideration : And in order to arrive at a just decision in this important enquiry, in order to ascertain the real character of the faith which you cherish, you will do well to reflect on the source from which it is derived ; if it be drawn from that sacred and inviolable repository of the truths of the Gospel, the ark of God's infallible Church, or if it be dictated to you by your own private judgments, which may possibly betray you into the grossest errors. And should you perceive upon examination, that it rests solely on the authority of the latter, reject it without delay, as destitute of a safe and satisfactory foundation, and consult with docility the oracle of God.

Having instituted an enquiry into the nature of your faith, it becomes you in the next place to pass in review the habitual conduct of your lives, to compare it with the terms of that holy religion, which, as hired labourers in the vineyard of the Lord, you have agreed to accept, and to see if in every respect you have religiously observed them. The terms on which you have entered into the service of your Divine Master, imply a constant, strenuous, and unreserved devotion of all the energies of your being, to a faithful discharge of the duties assigned you in that part of his vineyard

committed to your charge. Various are the offices distributed by the Great Master of the vineyard to the numerous servants engaged in his employ. To some he has allotted a small portion of his estate, and limited their services to their own personal exertions in the cultivation of it. Of this description are they whom poverty compels to eat their bread with the sweat of their brow ; who are doomed to toil from morning till night for their daily subsistence ; and who at the same time, not being linked by the ties of wedlock, have no domestic cares to distract their minds, or to prevent them, to use the language of St. Paul, from attending upon the Lord without impediment. (1 Cor. c. 7. v. 35.) Yes, my poor, and at the same time unmarried, friends, (for it is to such exclusively that I wish this part of my instruction to be understood to be addressed,) yes, I say, my poor, and at the same time, unmarried friends, the part of the vineyard which it is given to you to manage, is confined within a narrow compass. It is that little allotment which each of you bears within him, his own dear and immortal soul. And it is to the exercise of your industry in the cultivation of that little allotment, that the whole of your duty is restricted. Your condition of life, therefore, my poor friends, if justly estimated, must be allowed to possess no inconsiderable advantages. For whilst it provides you with the means of acquiring whatever is necessary for your well-being in this world, it furnishes you with

facilities beyond every other, of promoting your more elevated and everlasting interests in that which is to come. What in reality are the essential ingredients in the composition of what may be properly deemed your present well-being? Not wealth, not luxury, not dignity, not fame. No, none of these things are the true constituents of human felicity, which the most wretched are known sometimes to possess, and the most happy to want. But they are simply the three distinct articles, of raiment, food, and lodging, added to that greatest of earthly comforts, a well-regulated and contented mind. "For having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content," says the Apostle of the Gentiles, and "godliness," he observes, "with contentment, is great gain." Now these advantages, my poor friends, are all most certainly within your reach. For if you labor faithfully, honestly, and conscientiously, in your humble callings, you will not fail in the acquisition of them. And oh! what facilities, what delightful facilities, present themselves to you for the attainment of that most desirable object which should be the main point to which all your thoughts, affections, and pursuits, should be principally directed, the important affair of your eternal salvation. You have no parental obligations to occupy your attention, no charge of the conduct of others to disturb your minds, no temptations to accommodate yourselves to the prevailing modes and practices of the world, which are oftentimes incon-



sistent with the spirit of the Gospel ; but the whole bent of your minds, undivided and unrestrained, may be applied without opposition to the sanctification of your souls. Truly, my friends, a condition like this, when duly weighed with all the circumstances connected with it, may well be considered as a special favor conferred upon you, by the great Lord of the vineyard, who has allotted it to you. Do you, in return, be thankful to him for it, and manifest to him your gratitude for the same, by your punctual compliance with the duties annexed to it. Let your prayers ascend in the morning, as incense in his sight. Let your evening sacrifice of adoration, thanksgiving, and supplication, be the never-failing prelude to your repose from the labours of each succeeding day ; and let an exact discharge of all the duties of your station be animated and consecrated by the sublime principle of obedience to the holy will of God. “ Not serving to the eye,” as the Apostle admonishes, “ as it were pleasing men, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With a good will, doing service as to the Lord and not to men ; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man shall do, the same shall he receive from the Lord, whether he be, bond or free.” (EPHES. *c.* VI. *v.* 6, 7, 8.)

Others there are, who, although the part of his domain, which the Lord of the vineyard has appointed them to cultivate, be inconsiderable, like that which I have just described, have the addi-



tional charge imposed upon them, in consequence of their matrimonial engagements, of superintending the conduct of others who are subjected to their inspection. I mean those, who, besides being necessitated by the circumstances of their condition, to labour incessantly for their own support, have a family of children, whom it is incumbent on them to provide for, and who have a right to look up to them, not only for the food that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life. It behoves all those, who are comprised within this class, to reflect seriously on the importance of the obligations, which, as parents, they are expected to fulfill. It behoves them to remember, that not only the bodies, but what is of infinitely greater consequence, the souls also, of their beloved offspring are intrusted to their care; and that they are responsible for the injuries, spiritual as well as corporal, which, by the influence of their own bad example, inattention, or neglect, they may occasion them to sustain. It behoves them to remember, that to them is committed the sacred trust of instilling good and religious principles into the youthful minds of their children, of guiding their steps in the path of virtue, and of guarding them with circumspection from the numerous syrens of vice and error, who may attempt to seduce them from the course of righteousness. And finally, above all, it behoves them to remember, that if, instead of discharging towards them these parental duties, they

become, by their own misconduct, stumbling blocks of offence to their dear little ones, "it were better that a mill-stone were suspended from their necks, and that they were precipitated headlong into the depth of the ocean."

The next description of persons engaged in the service of the Lord of the vineyard, which obviously occurs, consists of those, who, though in a condition of life superior to that of daily labourers, depend, nevertheless, for the maintenance both of themselves and families, on the profits arising from their commercial or professional pursuits. But as the duties attached to this class of individuals, if to them be added that of incorruptible integrity in the various transactions in which they may be concerned, are proportionably the same as those which I have already mentioned, I shall pass them by, at present, without any further remark, in order that I may have time to offer a few observations on the higher orders, including persons in every gradation of rank and condition, from the monarch on the throne, to the private gentleman of independent fortune, whose circumstances, indeed, exempt them from the toils of industry, for their daily subsistence, but who, notwithstanding, have departments assigned to them in the vineyard of the Lord, which demand from them no inconsiderable exertions. The greater the number of their dependents, the more weighty is their charge, and the wider is the extent of their responsibility. The property which

they hold is not their own, nor are the stations which they fill, or the authority which they exercise over their subordinate fellow-labourers in the vineyard of their common master, delegated to them for the purpose of personal aggrandisement. No. The interest, the glory, the satisfaction of that great universal proprietor, to whom "belong the earth and the fulness thereof," are the grand objects to which they should be made subservient. And those ends it should be their endeavour to attain, by encouraging industry, relieving distress, exercising hospitality, contributing to the instruction of the ignorant, promoting the propagation of religion and morality, and by diffusing the light of their own virtuous example through every part of the sphere in which they move. "Charge the rich of this world," says St. Paul to his beloved Timothy, "not to be high-minded, nor to trust in uncertain riches, but in the Living God, (who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy) to do good, to be rich in good works, to give easily, to communicate, (to others) to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the true life." 1 TIM. c. vi. v. 17, 18, 19.)

It is stated in the parable that they who were hired to work in the Lord's vineyard, at the eleventh hour, received in the evening a remuneration from him, equal to that which he gave to those who had entered at earlier periods into his employ, and who had borne the burthen of the



day, and the heat. I am authorized, in like manner, by my Divine Master, to announce to sinners, the satisfactory information, that though, like the labourers in the parable, who had stood all the day idle, till the eleventh hour, they may have neglected the cultivation of piety and virtue to an advanced hour of the day of their mortal lives, though they may have grown grey with impiety, and the fires of concupiscence may have continued to rage within them to a late period, yet, if they sincerely confess and repent of their transgressions, and dedicate the remainder of their earthly existence to the service of their Creator, they will be requited at the close of it, with an abundant recompense. For God himself has most solemnly declared, by the mouth of his prophet, that “at whatever time the wicked turneth himself away from his wickedness which he hath wrought, and doeth judgment and justice, he shall save his soul alive.” (EZECH. c. XVIII. v. 27.)

Imagine not, however, my friends, that this gracious mercy of the Almighty is to be made with impunity a ground of presumptuous confidence. Think not that it encourages you to defer your conversion to the decrepitude of age. “Disputest thou,” says St. Paul, “the riches of his goodness and patience, and long-suffering? Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance?” Recollect, my friends, that the labourers who, in the parable, were engaged at the eleventh hour, by the Lord of the vineyard, in the cultiva-



tion of his domain, do not appear to have received a previous offer of employment. For when they were asked, "why they stood in the market place all the day idle," their answer was, "because no man hath hired us." Nor was it till he had obtained from them this reply, that he said to them, "go you also into my vineyard." But *they* surely have it not in their power to make any such reply, who, at the more early hours of their lives have resisted the calls and inspirations of heaven, and deferred the reformation of their conduct to a more remote period of their existence. Alas! my young friends, to you, that period may never perhaps arrive. Your day may be short. Your sun, for ought you know, may set at the ninth, sixth, or even at the third hour, should you not yet have reached it,—nay, set never to rise again: and at the eleventh hour, to which you look forward, as to the future period of your intended exertions, you may be involved in the darkness of eternal night, when no man can work.

Let this consideration induce you, my friends, not to delay, no, not for a single moment, the important business of eternity. "To day, if you shall hear the voice of the Lord, harden not your hearts,"—yield a prompt and cordial submission to its divine influence. It will enable you to break asunder the bonds of iniquity, it will restore you to the liberty of children of God, and it will secure to you hereafter a blissful immortality.

## SERMON IX.

## SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

## ON THE WORD OF GOD.

GOSPEL. *St. Luke*, viii. v. 4-15. At that time, when a very great multitude was gathered together and hastened out of the cities unto him, he spoke by a similitude. The sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed some fell by the way side, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And other some fell upon a rock : and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And other some fell among thorns, and the thorns growing up with it, choked it. And other some fell upon good ground ; and being sprung up, yielded fruit a hundred fold. Saying these things, he cried out, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him what this parable might be. To whom he said, To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God ; but to the rest in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. And they by the way side are they that hear ; then the devil cometh, and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved. Now they upon the rock are they who when they hear, receive the word with joy ; and these have no roots, for they believe for awhile, and in time of temptation they fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they who have heard, and going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit. But that on the good ground, are they who in a good and very good heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience.

It appears from parallel passages in *St. Matthew* and *St. Mark*, that the significant parable which you have just heard, was delivered by our blessed

Saviour from a ship on the Lake of Genesareth, to a great number of person collected together on the shore. Having finished it, he exclaimed, "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear," and then left them without further remark, to put their own construction upon it. But his apostles, who were with him in the ship, not being able to comprehend its meaning, applied to him for an interpretation of it. "And his disciples asked him what this parable was." To this their sincere and humble request, Jesus graciously condescended to accede; informing them at the same time that, although to them a clear knowledge of the important truths of salvation was allowed to be communicated, yet that privilege was not conceded to the great body of the Jewish people, who, by the unconquerable stubbornness and perversity of their hearts, had rendered themselves altogether unworthy of it; and on that account, to them the mysteries of God were enveloped in the obscurity of parables, which, whilst they typified in a striking manner the veil spread before their eyes, realized also the prediction of the prophet Isaiah, that "seeing they should see and should not perceive, and that hearing they should hear and should not understand." "To whom he said, to you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand." Having made to them this preliminary observation, he then proceeded to that plain, natural, and instructive ex-



plication of the parable which I have already laid before you, and from which I now purpose to draw a few observations, with a view to the promotion of your spiritual interests.

From the exposition given by our blessed Saviour himself of this admirable parable, it appears that by the seed is to be understood the word of God; by the sower, Christ himself, (this though not explicitly stated in the explication of the present parable, is evidently implied, and in the explication of the parable of the tares it is expressly observed, that "he who soweth good seed is the Son of Man.") And by the different kinds of soil on which the seed is disseminated, the various descriptions of hearers, to whom the word of God is announced. Of this not less than four different sorts are distinctly enumerated. The first is described as the way-side; the second as a rocky soil; the third as a soil overrun with thorns; and the fourth is emphatically denominated a good soil. Respecting the first of these four kinds of soil, our blessed Saviour has given the following interpretation. "And they by the way-side are those that hear, then the devil cometh and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing, they should be saved." We have here, in the first place, a lively description of the incredulous Jews and Gentiles, to whom the doctrine of salvation was announced; but the former of whom, like the beaten way-side, being hardened by their inveterate prejudices, and the latter by the pride of human wisdom, rejected with indig-



nation, or trampled with disdain on, the seed of the divine word disseminated amongst them, whilst the infernal enemy of the human race, by means of his blasphemous or prophane suggestions, which may be compared with the fowls of the air in the parable, snatched it instantly away from their minds, lest it might make at length its way into the hardened soil through the medium of faith, and be productive of the fruit of eternal salvation, "lest believing they should be saved." Hence we read in the sacred Scriptures, that the Jews, though they were astonished at the wisdom and miracles of the Redeemer of mankind, though they expressed their admiration in the most energetic terms, though they acknowledged that he spoke as never man spoke, and that he did works which never man did, refused nevertheless to embrace his doctrines, and ascribed his prodigies to the power of the devil. "And all the multitude was amazed, and said, is not this the Son of David? But the Pharisees hearing it, said, this man casteth not out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." (MATT. c. xii. v. 23, 24.) Hence too the contempt with which, among the Gentiles, St. Paul was treated by the philosophers of Greece, whilst he proclaimed at Athens the saving truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, when, as is related in the Acts of the Apostles, "certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics disputed with him, and some said, what is it that this babbler would say? And hence the same Apostle, in his first epistle to

the Corinthians, observes, "for both the Jews require signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles foolishness." (COR. *c. i. v. 22, 23.*)

But it is not only among the incredulous Jews and Gentiles in the early days of Christianity, that we are to look for persons who may justly be compared with the way-side in the parable. No; they are to be met with also in modern times, and that too, it is to be apprehended, in no inconsiderable numbers. Such are all those haughty pretenders to superior wisdom, those idolators of human reason, who hold it to be degrading to the dignity of the mind, to assent to doctrines which they can not comprehend, and who, like their pagan predecessors, in ancient Greece, presume to subject the counsels of the Most High, to the weak conceptions of their contracted intellects. Such is that class of practical infidels, who do not, indeed, like professed unbelievers, reject systematically the doctrines of the Gospel, but who are perfectly unconcerned and indifferent about them. The occupations, pursuits, and amusements, of the present transient scene, are the sole object which engage their attention. But as to their everlasting destinies in a future state of existence, these do not enter at all into their consideration, or their plans of conduct. Like Gallio, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, "they do not care for any of these things." (ACTS, *c. xviii. v. 17.*) Born

in a Christian country, and of Christian parents, they think it perhaps decorous to frequent a place of Christian worship. But the soil of their hearts being hardened by the pressure of earthly concerns and enjoyments, to which it is a constant and habitual thoroughfare, becomes in a manner impenetrable to the seed of the divine word ; which remaining of course upon the surface, is quickly swallowed up by worldly considerations, that, like the fowls of the air in the parable, may be said to devour it. Such in particular are the enemies of Catholicity, who, by the early prepossessions which they have imbibed against it, and by their subjection of the sacred scriptures to the fallacious decisions of their private judgments, may be thought to unite in its regard the prejudices of the Jews with the lofty pretensions of the Gentiles ; and who thus, like the way-side, are rendered callous to conviction of the truth of its revealed tenets. In vain are they made acquainted with the doctrines which it teaches, and the unanswerable arguments by which those doctrines are substantiated. For the misrepresentations which have been exhibited to them of that venerable religion, the false colors in which it has been tricked out to their deluded imaginations, the absurdities, superstitions, immoralities, and atrocities, which have been falsely attributed to it by ignorance and malignity, have so hardened the soil of their hearts, that the seed of the divine word, cast upon it by the sowers, are incapable of



penetrating it ; whilst the false notions which they have been led to entertain of the right of private judgment in ascertaining articles of religious belief, oppose at the same time an insuperable obstacle to the authority of God's infallible Church. The seed may remain, perhaps, for a short time, on the beaten surface of their obdurate hearts ; but it quickly becomes a prey to those granivorous fowls of the air, those voracious devourers of the sacred grain of celestial truth, the slander and scurrility of illiterate declaimers.

The next species of soil upon which the seed in the parable is represented to be sown, is denominated by the Gospel a rocky soil, which Christ, in his interpretation of it, applies to those, " who, when they have heard, receive the word with joy, and these," he observes, " have no roots ; who believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away." Behold, my friends, a lively representation of the conduct of too many weak and inconstant believers in the early ages of Christianity, as well as at the present day. Of these we are presented with an apposite example in the 15th Chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, in which Jesus is related to have thus replied to the young man, who consulted him on the important affair of his eternal salvation ; " Go sell all thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have a treasure in heaven." (MATT. c. XIX. v. 22, 23.) The youth here mentioned had listened, no doubt, with attention, to the words of eternal life, which



fell from the lips of the blessed Jesus, and had felt the impression made by them upon his mind, since he was induced to apply to that divine teacher, to learn the course which it was incumbent on him to pursue, to secure the salvation of his immortal soul. "Good master," said the youthful enquirer, "what good must I do that I may have life everlasting?" (MATT. c. XIX. v. 16.) But the impression was not deep; it was not, therefore, sufficiently strong to withstand the trials of temporal inconveniences, of the losses and hardships to which his adherence to the cause of the Gospel might make it necessary for him to submit; and hence, when the abandonment of his earthly interests was specified as a condition for the attainment of the object of his pursuit, he is immediately stated to have shrunk in dejection from so discouraging a proposal; "and when the young man heard this word," says the sacred text, "he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." Thus, though it appears that the seed of the divine word had penetrated beneath the surface of his heart, yet, as the soil into which it had been received was a rocky soil, and therefore too shallow to allow it to take sufficient root, the scorching heat of the first violent temptation which occurred, withered, instantaneously, the feeble plant to which it had just shot up. Instances are also furnished, in the history of the Church, of persons to be included in this description of soil, who, in the early ages of persecution, were intimidated into a

dereliction of the cause of Christianity, by the sufferings and barbarities to which its adherents were subjected. And as formerly, so in our own times, samples of this rocky soil, as it is termed in the parable, are but too frequently, alas! to be met with. They are to be met with in those, who listen with attention to the ministers of the Gospel, who revere the mysteries, admire the morality, respect the institutions of religion, but who do not feel its influence with sufficient force to enable them to resist the delusive seductions of false philosophy, and corrupt licentiousness. They assent, indeed, to the truth of the doctrines which they hear, and they manifest for a time the fruit of the divine seed which has been sown in their hearts, by a corresponding tenor of conduct. "They believe for awhile," says the sacred text. "But not having it deeply rooted in their affections, in time of temptation they fall away." They profess the tenets, and comply with the injunctions of the religion of Jesus Christ, so long as they can do both without sustaining any considerable inconvenience; but, no sooner are they assailed by the various weapons too successfully employed by the enemies of Christianity against its weak adherents,—by sophistry, ridicule, contempt,—by illiberal raillery and low buffoonery,—than their principles and their practice are at once relinquished. Similar specimens of this rocky soil are to be found moreover in those, who listen occasionally to the instructions delivered by the

ministers of Catholicity, who are inwardly convinced of the truth of the doctrines expounded by them, and who feel a secret disposition to embrace them, but who, influenced unfortunately by a variety of considerations, by the fear of incurring reproach, by a reluctance to abandon the religious system in which they have been educated, by the dread of certain humiliating practices, to which their adoption of Catholic principles would require them to submit, or by the apprehension of some injury, which they may possibly sustain in their temporal concerns, are deterred from obeying the dictates of their consciences, and from carrying their wishes into effect. And, finally, I grieve to say it, instances resembling those which I have just mentioned, have also been found among Catholics themselves; whom the privations, disabilities, and vexations, to which their faith exposed them, have occasioned to apostatize from the religion of their fathers, and to profess their adherence to a system of belief more favorable to their worldly interests, though in their consciences inwardly disavowed.

We are now to consider a third description of soil of which the parable speaks; which, though it be not, like the first, remarkable for its hardness, nor deficient, like the second, in depth of earth, is rendered nevertheless unfavorable to the vegetation of the seed deposited in it, by a profusion of noxious thorns which prevent it from being productive. Now this thorny soil, our divine expo-



sitor informs us, is figurative of those “ who have heard, and going their way, are choaked with the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit.” How numerous, my friends, are the characters, to whom the species of soil here mentioned, is but too applicable! What more common than to behold young persons, in whose hearts sound principles of religion and virtue have been sown, and have taken root, and have sprung up, and flourished with the most promising luxuriance, frustrating, alas! the efforts of their instructors, and disappointing the expectations of their relations and friends, by the inordinate indulgence of their corrupt propensities; which, like the thorns in the parable, they suffer to grow up within them, and to stifle, by their baneful influence, the produce of the good seed with which they are mingled. They are instructed in the truths, and trained up in the practice, of the religion of Jesus Christ, under the parental roof. The early impressions which they there receive, and the virtuous habits which they are there taught to form, are afterwards, perhaps, confirmed and strengthened by the advantages of education. But no sooner do they go forth from those calm retreats into the tumultuous world; no sooner do they begin to mix with its deluded inhabitants, than they perceive a system totally different, both in speculation and in practice, universally to prevail. They hear men speak of nothing but of their temporal concerns. The interests of religion appear



not at all to occupy their minds. They see them bending all their thoughts, and directing all their efforts, to worldly objects. The acquirement of honors, the accumulation of wealth, and the enjoyment of pleasure, seem wholly to absorb every other consideration ; and whatever is not conducive to these purposes, is discarded as altogether unworthy of attention. Associating habitually with persons of this temper and disposition of mind, and who are constantly engaged in these pursuits, they naturally slide into the same way both of thinking and of acting. They pursue, like them, with the most vehement ardor and indefatigable industry, the particular object which is most congenial to their inclinations, and which the circumstances of their condition have placed within their reach. If their possessions be but slender, they endeavour to increase them. If they have already sufficient, they wish to acquire more. If they be satisfied with their wealth, they seek to aggrandize themselves by worldly distinctions, or to indulge their appetites in sensual gratifications. And all that feeling interest in the good things of the Lord, in the land of the living, which at an early period of their lives, the seed of the divine word had so happily produced within them, is stifled and choked by their boundless ardor and insatiable avidity for the comparatively trivial things of earth, which, like thorns, have been permitted to overspread their hearts. The application which I have made of this part of the parable

regards principally, it is true, the higher classes of society. Yet the lowest are not entirely excluded from it. For it is lamentable to think, that in the hearts even of the poor,—the soil in which the blessed Jesus delighted to sow, during his mortal life, the seed of his divine word, and which, on various accounts, seems particularly favorable to its growth,—a multiplicity of worldly cares, anxieties and troubles, are apt too frequently to spring up, like the thorns in the parable, and to hinder it from producing the fruit which might naturally be expected.

Think not, however, my friends, that it is by any means the design of this part of the parable to represent the concerns of earth as wholly incompatible with the growth of the divine seed. It is an inordinate attachment to them only which it so contemplates. It is that extreme solicitude respecting temporal things, which makes men lose sight of those which are eternal. It is that immoderate desire of human applause and distinction which prompts them to seek the praise of their fellow-creatures, in preference to that of their great Creator. It is that idolatry of riches, as it is termed by the Apostle, which induces them to offer to the mammon of the world, the supreme homage of their affections, which should be presented exclusively to the Lord of Heaven. It is that passionate fondness for the gaities, amusements, and dissipations, of the present transient

and delusive scene, which causes them, in the language of the Apostle, to be “lovers of pleasure more than of God.” (2 TIM. c. ii. v. 4.) Such, my friends, are the thorns which the parable is intended to hold forth as opposed to the vegetation of the divine seed in your souls; and not that discreet, temperate, and subordinate regard for earthly things, which is perfectly consistent with a paramount attachment to the more important interests of eternity.

The last kind of soil mentioned in the parable is denominated a good soil, which is distinguished from the others by its exuberant fruitfulness. “And some,” says the parable, “fell upon good ground, and sprang up, and yielded fruit a hundred fold.” By this soil, according to the interpretation of the Divine Author of the parable, are meant those, “who, in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word of God, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience.” The persons, then, my friends, comprised in this class of hearers, are they who are actuated by pure and upright intentions, in going to hear the word of God, who listen to it with docility and respect, and make it afterwards the rule of their conduct. Their object is not to gratify an idle curiosity, nor to make remarks on the preacher and his performance; but to be instructed in their duty, to be reminded of their failings, and to be stimulated at once to the practice of the one, and the correction of the others.



With sincere, therefore, and honest minds, with minds free from prejudice and passion, "they receive with meekness," as St. James admonishes, "the engrafted word which is able to save their souls." They do not apply censoriously the observations which they hear to the conduct of others, but humbly appropriate them to themselves, with a view to the amendment of their own defects, and to the promotion of their own spiritual improvement. Nor do they, when the religious instruction is closed, banish instantaneously the subject from their thoughts; and in so doing, as St. James observes, "resemble a man, who, having beheld his natural countenance in a glass, went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was;"—but reflecting seriously, and meditating upon it, they manifest its efficacy in the reformation of their lives; and thus, in the words of the sacred text, "hearing the word, they kept it, and bring forth fruit in patience."

Since therefore, my friends, it appears from the parable of this day's Gospel, that the fruitfulness of the divine seed depends upon the nature and condition of the soil in which it is deposited, let your most fervent petitions be sent up to the throne of the Almighty, that by the good and excellent dispositions of your souls, you may become that "good soil, which bringeth forth fruit a hundred fold." Entreat him to shower down on this renovated soil, the plentiful effusions of his



holy spirit. Use at the same time your own best endeavours to eradicate from it all those noxious thorns of irregular affections and appetites, which may possibly make their appearance upon it. Labour assiduously in the cultivation of it; and by the blessing of Heaven, it will not fail to produce an abundant harvest, which will nourish your souls unto everlasting life.

## SERMON X.

## QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

## ON SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS.

GOSPEL. *St. Luke*, xviii. v. 31-43. At that time, Jesus took unto him the twelve, and said to them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man : for he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon ; and after they have scourged him, they will put him to death, and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them, and they understood not the things that were said. Now it came to pass, when he drew nigh to Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the way-side, begging. And when he heard the multitude passing by, he asked what this meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, Jesus son of David, have mercy on me. And they that went before, rebuked him, that he should hold his peace ; but he cried out much more, Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus standing, commanded him to be brought unto him ; and when he was brought near, he asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I do to thee ? But he said, Lord, that I may see. And Jesus said to him, Receive thy sight ; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he saw, and followed him, glorifying God ; and all the people when they saw it, gave praise to God.

THE blessed Jesus was proceeding towards Jerusalem, in company with his twelve Apostles, there to consummate, by his sufferings and death, that great sacrifice of propitiation for the sins of a guilty world, which was the main object of his

divine mission. Being willing to fortify the weak minds of those chosen ministers of his spiritual kingdom, against every impression of discouragement and dejection, which the sad spectacle of his approaching sorrows would be calculated to produce, he took this opportunity of intimating to them, that those sorrows were neither unforeseen nor involuntary; that as they had been long since foretold by the ancient prophets, so he was prepared to meet them with the firmness and intrepidity of a self-devoted victim, for the welfare of the human race; and that, degrading and melancholy as they might appear to be, the issue of them would be glorious and happy; because the cruel and ignominious death to which he was about spontaneously to submit, would shortly be succeeded by his resurrection from the tomb. "Then Jesus took unto him the twelve, and said to them: behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man. For he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon; and after they have scourged him, they will put him to death, and the third day he shall rise again." So imperfectly, however, were the Apostles yet acquainted with the character of their divine Master, such erroneous notions had they been led to entertain of the nature of that kingdom, which he came upon earth to establish, that they were utterly at a loss to comprehend his meaning. "And they understood none

of these things," says the sacred text, "and this word was hidden from them, and they understood not the things that were said." Still he pursued his journey, and had reached the neighbourhood of Jericho, when his ears were suddenly assailed by the plaintive cry of a person, apparently in deep distress. It was the supplicating voice of a poor blind man, sitting by the way-side, who having been informed by the multitude that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, earnestly solicited him to have compassion on him. "Jesus," he cried, "thou son of David, have mercy on me." Nor was he to be deterred from persisting in his entreaties, by the reproofs which he experienced from those who wished to reduce him to silence. But he persevered, exclaiming with redoubled energy, "son of David, have mercy on me." The suppliant importunities of this poor blind man, far from exciting emotions of displeasure in the breast of the compassionate Jesus, tended, on the contrary, to awaken his pity, and to interest him in his behalf. For he kindly condescended to interrupt his journey, that he might listen to the prayer of the petitioner, and pay attention to his case. "And Jesus stood," says the sacred text, "and commanded him to be brought to him." Having been informed by him that the object of his supplication was the recovery of his sight, which evidently implied his confidence in the power and goodness of the being to whom his prayer was addressed, our blessed Lord rewarded



his faith by an immediate compliance with his humble request. "And Jesus said to him, receive thy sight, thy faith hath made thee whole." No sooner was his blindness removed, than he manifested, with a loud voice, his gratitude to Heaven, and his faithful adherence to the benevolent Thaumaturgus, who had operated his cure; and all who witnessed the astonishing event, were induced to testify the admiration which they felt, by their praises of the Most High. "And immediately he saw, and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God."

The deplorable condition of the blind man in the gospel, is more or less applicable, in a spiritual sense, to four different descriptions of persons. It is applicable, in the first place, to those who, involved in the darkness of infidelity, refuse to open their eyes to the light of revelation; secondly, to those whose eyes, though opened to that beneficent light, are so distempered by morbid prejudices, as to be prevented from discovering the true forms and colors of the objects which it exhibits to their view; thirdly, to those, whose passions intercept, by the thick mists which they raise around them, its illuminating beams: and finally, to those, in whom its influence is dimmed by the false lights of their erroneous consciences. They, then, I say, in the first place, may be said to resemble, in a spiritual point of view, the blind man in the Gospel, who obstinately close their minds to the light with which "the Orient from

on high hath graciously visited them," and who continue, in opposition to it, with unconquerable perversity to "sit in darkness, and in the shade of death." Such were the philosophers of the pagan world, who, elated by the pride of human wisdom, despised the doctrines of a crucified Redeemer, as the suggestions of folly. Such are their still more inexcusable imitators in modern times, who, notwithstanding the examples with which history furnishes them of the extravagances and follies into which reason has plunged its deluded votaries, prefer nevertheless its unsafe and deceitful guidance, to the more secure and enlightened direction of faith. This, indeed, it must be acknowledged, is a most deplorable blindness. For it is a blindness, which, whilst it overspreads the mind with the thickest darkness, hinders it, at the same time, from having recourse to the only expedient by which that darkness may be expelled. What night, in reality, more dark, than that which prevails in the soul of the wretched infidel? He knows not what, nor whence he is, nor why he is here, nor whither he is going. He is ignorant at once of the Lord, who made him; of the Saviour, who redeemed him; and of the Holy Spirit, who is prepared to sanctify him. He gropes his way through life with his little glimmering taper before him, (for such reason, unaided by revelation, may be said to be) he gropes, I say, his way through life, with his little glimmering taper before him, in danger of falling every step

he takes, till he reach at length the tomb; and there his light goes out: all beyond is impenetrable darkness. All beyond is cheerless and desolate; all beyond is a land of desolation, where, in the language of holy Job, "no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth." Good God! my friends, what a dismal, horrid gloom, is this! And what renders it still more dismal and horrid, is the opposition which exists to the removal of it. For it is the folly of those, who have the misfortune to be involved in the darkness of infidelity, to imagine that they are walking all the while in noon-day light; resembling, in this respect, their heathen predecessors, of whom St. Paul remarks, "that their foolish hearts were darkened, and that professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." (Rom. c. i. v. 21-22). And thus, as the sight of the blind man in the Gospel, would not have been restored, had he not applied to the heavenly physician who was passing by, and as he never would have applied to him, had he not been sensible of the reality of his blindness; so these wretched votaries of infidelity, not being conscious of that mental darkness in which they are enveloped, but conceiting themselves, on the contrary, to be the most enlightened of human beings, have no notion of suing for relief to that great source of divine illumination, that "enlighteneth every man who cometh into the world;" and consequently, they remain in their unhappy state. There are not any, I am convinced, of the spiritually blind



of this description among my present hearers ; but, if unfortunately there were, the following is the language in which I would address them. Deluded children of incredulity, who, on your extravagant estimation of the natural force of your intellectual powers, reject as useless the aid of revelation, listen, I entreat you, to the few observations, which, as your well-wisher and friend, I am about to submit to your serious consideration. Think not, that it is my intention to depreciate in any manner the just value of human reason. I am sensible, on the contrary, of its intrinsic excellence ; and am willing to acknowledge it to be the best prerogative of your being, the faculty which gives to man a decided superiority above every other species of the animated creation in this sublunary world, and in which consists beyond every other the resemblance which he bears to the Author of his existence. It enables him to carry his researches into the secrets of nature, and to make a variety of important discoveries. From the physical, it leads him into the metaphysical and moral world, furnishes him there with many subjects of curious speculation, and many wise maxims for the regulation of his conduct. And what is of incomparably greater consequence, it elevates his mind to that great Universal Cause, from whom all things proceed, and in whom “ we live, move, and have our being.”—“ For the invisible things of him,” says the Apostle, “ from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the



things that are made, his eternal power also and divinity." (Rom. c. i. v. 20.) But here its office and commission end. It can go no farther. It can not proceed with you into those ulterior regions of the mysteries of God, which are replete, however, with objects in the knowledge of which you are deeply interested. It can not make you acquainted with the true state of your present condition, nor can it unfold to you your future destination. There is another guide, to whom the office of disclosing to you these important objects has been divinely committed ; and whose secure direction reason itself admonishes you to follow. That guide is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yes, it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that can instruct you in these supernatural truths. It is the Gospel alone, that can impart to you authentic intelligence of the end for which God has placed you in this temporary habitation, and of his farther designs in your regard. It is the Gospel alone, that can make known to you with certainty, your terms of acceptance with Him ; which can point out to you the way of the divine commandments, in which it becomes you to pursue your course ; which can prevent you from wandering into the devious paths of error, and of vice ; and which can accurately teach you what it becomes you to believe, and what to practice, in order that you may obtain everlasting life. It is the Gospel alone, that can clear up every doubt, and disentangle every perplexity respecting the mysterious dispensations of

Providence, which are apt sometimes to arise in the best disposed minds. It is the Gospel alone, that can effectually support you in the most trying scenes of affliction and distress,—which can gladden the last moments of expiring life,—and which can cause you to descend with courage into the tomb,—by directing the attention of your departing spirit to that cheering prospect of a blissful immortality which lies open beyond it. Such, I say, my friends, are the highly momentous and satisfactory disclosures which the Gospel makes to those who commit themselves without hesitation to its unerring direction; and that you may with perfect security abandon yourselves to its guidance, without the slightest danger of being misled by it, you have the authority of reason itself to convince you. For reason itself presents you with a variety of strong and unanswerable proofs, by which the claim of the Gospel to your confidence is clearly established. Those proofs are, the completion of the prophecies which were fulfilled in the person of its Divine Author; the illustrious and well attested miracles which he performed, the sublimity of his doctrines, the purity of his moral precepts, the sanctity of his life; the rapid propagation, extensive diffusion, and unshaken stability, of his holy religion, in opposition to every possible means which human depravity, combined with infernal malice, could employ or devise for its extirpation from the earth. To which may be added, a vast number of collateral proofs, and subordinate cir-

cumstances, all concurring to form such a body of evidence as no other truth was ever able to boast. Surely, my friends, the whole of this collective evidence with which reason itself furnishes you, in support of the credit due to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, should be sufficient to induce you to take it for your guide, and to be directed by its dictates.

From the consideration of the condition of the professed infidel, I now proceed to the less deplorable indeed, but yet melancholy state of those, who, though the light of revelation be not completely shut out from their minds, are prevented nevertheless, by the false medium through which they look, and by the distempered state of their mental faculties, from receiving a true impression of the objects on which it shines. These persons, indeed, may be said to resemble more the blind man of whom St. Mark speaks, than him who is the subject of St. Luke's narrative in this day's Gospel ; of the former of whom, when imperfectly cured, the Evangelist has given the following statement. " And looking up, he said, I see men as trees walking." The situation of those who are at present under consideration, may, with propriety, be conceived in a spiritual sense, to be similar to his. Like the blind man who had imperfectly recovered his sight, they see not the objects presented to them by the light of revelation as they really are. They are accustomed to look at them through the delusive medium of private



judgment, and the eyes of their understandings being at the same time disordered by prejudices instilled into them by misrepresentation and calumny, they behold them not in their genuine forms. To those who have the misfortune to be thus imposed upon by false appearances, I have only to recommend the imitation of the conduct of the blind man in the Gospel. Let them exclaim, as he did, and in similar dispositions, "Son of David, have mercy on me." Let them entreat him to restore to them the complete possession of their spiritual sight, to deliver them from every unhappy prejudice by which it may be disordered, to remove from them every medium of delusion by which it may be deceived, and to enable them to discover, and not only to discover, but to embrace and cherish with sincerity and affection, those divine truths, which he has graciously revealed, in all their native purity and integrity.

The next description of persons that presents itself, whose condition, in a spiritual point of view, may in some measure be compared with that of the blind man in this day's Gospel, consists of those who abandon themselves to the licentiousness of their ungoverned passions. These are debarred from the light of the Gospel, not by any obstacle existing in their understandings, but by the exhalations arising from their corrupt propensities. The source of their infidelity is not in their heads, but in their hearts. It is not so much to the incomprehensibility of the mysteries which Christi-



anity contains, that they have any serious objection, as to the severity of its precepts. They are not disposed to lay that restraint on the inclinations of their hearts, which the Gospel prescribes, and therefore they shun it as an upbraiding monitor, whose reproofs are hostile to their sinful pleasures. Inordinately attached to the things of earth, actuated by views of personal aggrandizement, or addicted to the gratification of their sensual appetites, they cannot prevail upon themselves to adopt a system, which, if acted upon, would counteract all their favorite projects, and poison every enjoyment of their existence. “For every one,” says our blessed Saviour, “that doeth evil, hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reprovèd.” JOHN *c.* 3. *v.* 20.) Yet what is there after all in the precepts of the Gospel, calculated in reality to shock the feelings of any reasonable man? Christianity enjoins no extravagant austerities, nor is it opposed to any earthly pursuits, provided they be innocent, and confined within their just limits. True indeed it is, that it does not allow its adherents to make any of these things the principal objects of their attention, so as to supplant in their hearts the dominion of the Living God. But provided they be not permitted to usurp his rights,—provided his paramount authority be secured,—it suffers them to preserve unmolested a subordinate place in their affections. And in addition to these indulgent allowances, it promises moreover to its faithful votaries the

reward of boundless and everlasting felicity. Will you then, I would say to those whom the observations I have just been making, particularly regard, will you, with all these fair and reasonable allowances which are granted to you, give up at once every pretension to an eternity of happiness in a future state of permanent existence, for the sake of snatching a few momentary and ignoble gratifications in your rapid transit through this sublunary scene? Be not, my friends, be not, I entreat you, so insensible to your best and dearest interests! Suffer rather the light of the Gospel to shed its benign rays over your hearts, and to dissipate all those mists of passion with which they are overspread.

The last class of individuals affected by the malady of spiritual blindness, of whom it remains for me to speak, is composed of those on whose minds the beneficent luminary of revelation is permitted indeed to shine, but its rays being partially absorbed by their inordinate self-love, form that sort of imperfect and doubtful light which constitutes what is termed an erroneous conscience. Acting under the influence of this deceitful kind of light, they are apt to lose sight of a variety of duties which it becomes them to discharge, to imagine that they possess virtues to which they have no just pretensions, to mistake the unhallowed suggestions of passion for the pure dictates of conscientious rectitude, and to pursue a path which appears to them to be right, but which, if

not abandoned, will be found to terminate in their everlasting perdition. Exact in their daily exercises of devotion, diligent in their attendance at public worship, scrupulous in their observance of the ordinances of the Church, they yet overlook a diversity of important obligations which demand equally their attention and regard. They are not in every respect duly mindful of that great commandment of charity to their fellow-creatures, which holds so distinguished a place in the Christian institute. Nor do they exercise that becoming control over their passions and their tempers, without which, their piety, however ardent, will not recommend them to the favor of heaven. They are apt to persuade themselves, and too frequently to persuade others, that because indeed they have virtue on their lips, and speak of it perhaps with energy, they have it also in their hearts; and mistaking the dictates of passion for the sacred impulse of religious zeal, they actually think they are doing God service, whilst they asperse the characters of the creatures of his hand; though St. James, on the contrary, has explicitly assured us, that "if we have a bitter zeal, it is not wisdom descending from above, but earthly, sensual, diabolical."

That you, my friends, may not be the dupes of such dangerous delusions, let me exhort you to remember that religion is not confined to exercises of devotion, but that it is an enlarged, constant, and habitual principle of action, directing, regu-



lating, animating the conduct of those who are devoted to it, in all places, at all times, and in every circumstance and relation of life. Let me exhort you to carry your most diligent researches into the innermost recesses of your hearts, and to examine with nice and impartial investigation all the secret springs and motives by which they are actuated. And finally, let me exhort you to sue with the earnestness, perseverance, and confidence of the blind man in the Gospel, to that great source of supernatural light “that enlighteneth every man who cometh into the world,” to dispel from your minds all the mists of error with which they may be obscured, and as he did, to walk henceforward in the footsteps of the blessed Jesus, —who will infallibly lead you to the Jerusalem which is above ; where, in the inspired language of the Apocalypse, “night shall be no more, and where his faithful followers shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of the sun, for the Lord God shall enlighten them, and they shall reign for ever and ever.”



## SERMON XI.

### FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

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#### ON TEMPTATIONS.

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GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, iv. 1-11. At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry. And the tempter coming said to him, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Who answered and said, It is written, Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. Then the devil took him up into the holy city, and set him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, That he hath given his angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said to him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again the devil took him up into a very high mountain; and shewed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and said to him, All these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me. Then Jesus saith to him, Be gone, Satan, for it is written, The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil left him, and behold angels came and ministered to him.

THE Gospel of this Sunday presents us with an account of a most extraordinary transaction. The blessed Jesus led into the desert by the Spirit of God, to be tempted by the devil! But was this an office consistent with the sanctity of the Spirit of God? And was not the situation in which the blessed Jesus himself was placed, beneath the

dignity of his august character? What! The spirit of truth condescend to become an agent in promoting the designs of the spirit of falsehood. The incarnate son of the Most High, set up as a mark against which his most bitter and determined enemy might discharge at leisure the shafts of his malignity! What could be the meaning of all this? That the whole of this proceeding has something in it extremely marvellous I am willing to allow. But, that it reflected, in any manner, the least disgrace on either of the two divine persons, who acted in it such conspicuous parts, I positively deny. On the contrary, I contend, that if all the circumstances connected with it, be duly attended to, it will be found to have highly redounded to their honor. For, consider, in the first place, the precise period when this event occurred. It was just after Jesus had been inaugurated by baptism into that sacred ministry, on the functions of which he was about to enter. It was just when this immortal champion of our salvation was on the point of opening his grand campaign against the prince of darkness, destined to terminate in the subversion of his despotic empire, and the emancipation of mankind from their degrading slavery. Fitting, therefore, it was, both for his own credit, and for the encouragement of his followers, that, in this conjuncture, he should clearly manifest his decided superiority over the infernal enemy with whom he was about to contend, and consequently the opportunity which was

here afforded him of evincing that superiority in so striking a manner, was worthy both of himself and of that Holy Spirit whose divine agency caused it to occur. But although the strength inherent in him was abundantly sufficient to qualify him to withstand the most formidable attack which might possibly be made upon him, by so inferior a foe, yet, for the benefit of his infirm adherents, he deemed it expedient to have recourse to a measure, which, in similar circumstances, it might be proper for *them* to adopt. That measure was the mortification of the sensual appetite by a temporary abstinence from corporal nourishment. "For he fasted," as we are informed in the Gospel, "forty days and forty nights." Perfectly calm and collected in his mind, he now awaited, with dignified composure, the assault of the enemy who advanced towards him. The first attempt of the devil was suggested by the keen sensation of hunger which Jesus experienced after his forty days fast. "And when," says the evangelist, "he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry." The consideration of this circumstance urged the tempter to endeavour to shake his confidence in his heavenly Father, by stimulating him to prove the validity of his pretensions to his assumed character of the Son of God, in a way which might argue a want of reliance on Divine Providence." "And the tempter coming, said to him; if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." This attempt, how-



ever, the blessed Jesus completely frustrated, by citing a passage in the book of Deuteronomy, delivered by Moses to the children of Israel; which evidently implies, that though the ordinary mode of sustenance should fail, yet that Great Provider for the wants and necessities of the creatures of his hand, has other means of supporting them at his disposal; and that in the boundless resources of his infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, it becomes them to confide, without apprehension or disquietude. “But he answered and said: Not by bread alone, doth man live, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Not having succeeded in this his first attempt against the Saviour of mankind, the tempter, altering his mode of attack, conducted him to Jerusalem, and having there stationed him on the summit of the Temple, resorted to an expedient which was the reverse of that which experience had proved to be ineffectual. For as he before endeavoured in vain to instigate him to a miracle which might have been construed into a distrust of the providence of the Most High, so he now strove to prevail upon him to embark in an undertaking which would have evinced a presumptuous confidence in his protection. This undertaking was nothing less than that of precipitating himself from the elevated station on which he then stood; and the more effectually to persuade him to so rash an act, he pretended to corroborate his wicked suggestions by the authority



of inspiration. "Then the devil took him up into the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, if thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, he hath given his angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone." But to this gross misapplication of the sacred text, in order to prove the lawfulness of the deed which he proposed, Jesus instantly replied by a prompt citation of another passage of holy writ, more apposite far to the proposal which was made to him, and which was calculated to exhibit in the clearest light the Devil's horrible prostitution of the oracle of God. "Jesus said to him, it is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." By which words he plainly intimated, that although the Almighty has promised his protection to those, who, amidst the difficulties and dangers to which they are unavoidably exposed in the discharge of the duties of their respective stations, put their trust and confidence in him, yet he has not pledged it to the daring adventurer, who should wantonly rush into the jaws of destruction. The tempter having been thus foiled in two attacks, which he successively made on the Saviour of mankind, with an arrogance worthy of the rebel angel who had aspired presumptuously to an equality with the Most High, had the audacity at length to assail him in the very centre of his holiness. For having displayed to him a magnificent spectacle of costly

grandeur and opulence, he impiously sought, by the corrupt influence of such fascinating allurements, to obtain from him a tribute of religious homage. "Again the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and shewed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said to him: all these will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and adore me." But this last effort of diabolical effrontery was productive of no other effect than that of an instantaneous command, on the part of Jesus, to withdraw immediately from his presence, and the dignified terms in which it was delivered, were such as were well suited to the character, the sublime character, of the only begotten Son of God. "Then Jesus saith to him; begone Satan; for it is written, the Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve." This peremptory, authoritative, and dignified command, was obeyed without demur. "For then," says the sacred text, "The devil left him." And that firm reliance on the boundless resources of the divine beneficence, which he had so piously expressed, was justified by a deputation of celestial spirits, who furnished him with the sustenance which nature demanded. "And behold angels came and ministered to him."

The example of our blessed Saviour as it is exhibited to us in this day's Gospel, is pregnant at once with instruction and encouragement. It instructs us in the nature of the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged, with the enemy of our

souls, and it encourages us to meet his formidable attacks with firmness and intrepidity. It shews, that, as the Apostle of the Gentiles observes, "our wrestling is not with flesh and blood, (EPHES. c. vi. v. 12) but with that mighty prince of the power of this air, of the spirit that now worketh in the children of unbelief." (EPHES. c. vi. v. 12.) Yes, my friends, the devil, who, in the narrative of this day's Gospel, is represented to have made three successive assaults on the champion of your salvation, is the enemy it becomes you to be prepared to combat. His object is the establishment of his own dominion in your hearts, on the ruins of that of the living God. And the means which he employs for the accomplishment of his purpose, are usually accommodated to the circumstances of the persons against whom his diabolical efforts are directed. Three of those means are specifically exemplified in his attempts to subdue the Saviour of the world. The first is discernible in his endeavour to persuade him to perform a miracle for the supply of his wants, in order to prove himself to be the Son of God. "If," said he, "thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." It is by a similar suggestion that the same infernal tempter strives sometimes to shake the religious constancy of those who are in distress. If you be in reality, he says secretly to them, as you pretend to be, the children of the Most High, why are you thus abandoned to poverty and want? Why does not the powerful



influence of your prayers procure for you a supply of food? Why does it not, if necessary, cause the very stones which are scattered over the earth to be converted into bread? Such, my friends, are the unhallowed thoughts which the enemy of truth and virtue is wont to excite in the minds of the poor, to delude them into a neglect of the duties of religion. But you, my poor friends, will never, I trust, allow yourselves to be imposed upon by such deceitful insinuations. Animated, on the contrary, with a firm and immoveable confidence in the power, wisdom, and goodness of that Great Being who rules the universe, and who is both able and willing, from the treasures of his abundance, to relieve your wants, you will reply to them in the language of our blessed Saviour in the Gospel, "Not by bread alone doth man live, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Yes, my poor friends, the God whom you adore, is a gracious God. He will not suffer his faithful servants, who labor for the support of themselves and families, by the strenuous exertions of honest industry, to be left destitute of the means of subsistence. "I have been young," says the Psalmist, "and now am old, but I never saw the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread." Be not therefore solicitous about the necessities of life. Trust in God. Discharge with fidelity your obligations to him. Be diligent and active in the stations in which he has placed you;



and rest assured that he will not fail in one way or other to provide for your subsistence.

A second artifice employed by the devil, to accomplish his designs on the souls of men, is to be discovered in the circumstance of his conducting our blessed Saviour to the pinnacle of the temple, and there urging him to precipitate himself from it, under the full assurance of the divine protection. "If," says he, "thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, he hath given his angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Behold, my friends, in the conduct of the infernal tempter on this occasion, a lively representation of his mode of proceeding towards persons eminent for piety and virtue. Mounting up with them, as it were, to the pinnacle of the temple,—of the temple, I mean, of the Living God, which, by the assistance of the grace of Heaven, they have erected in their souls,—and suggesting to them extravagant notions of the secure protection of him who inhabiteth it, he urges them to precipitate themselves from their exalted station into all the dangers of a profane world, without the smallest apprehension of sustaining injury from such presumptuous confidence. He endeavours to persuade them, that circumstances and situations, which, to others perhaps, who have not yet reached the height of perfection which they have attained, might be attended indeed with considerable hazard, have nothing in them to excite,

in their more holy minds, the smallest degree of alarm or uneasiness ; and encourages them to rely on their favor with Heaven for their preservation from the consequences of their own temerity. But do not you, my pious friends, allow yourselves to be seduced by this deceitful stratagem. True, indeed, it is, that as St. Paul observes,—“ God is faithful, and will not permit you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will also with temptation make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.” (1 Cor. c. x. v. 13.) But then, let it be remembered, that the temptations of which the Apostle here speaks, are such as are in a manner unavoidable in the present condition of your nature. That these, and no others, were contemplated by him, is evident from the preceding context. “ Let no temptation take hold of you but such as is human.” In temptations of this description, to which even the most virtuous are liable, you may expect, with confidence, the protection of Heaven, provided you apply for it with earnest solicitation, and use, at the same time, your utmost efforts to resist them. But to imagine that you may rush with perfect security into the midst of dangers, which you might easily avoid,—to imagine that you may frequent the infectious haunts of libertinism and infidelity, without any risk of being tainted with the contagion,—to imagine, that whilst you indulge yourselves in familiar and tender intercourse with persons of a different sex, you have nothing to apprehend from

the serpent of impurity, which, under the false disguise of friendship, glides insensibly into the heart, and, winding itself around its inmost fibres, poisons the source of spiritual life,—to imagine that you may suffer your eyes to roam, or your imaginations to dwell, on whatever objects present themselves to you;—to imagine that you may peruse the most licentious publications, without any fear of imbibing their venom;—to imagine, I say, these things, is to labor under a gross and deplorable delusion. Since truth itself has explicitly declared, “that he who loveth danger shall perish in it.” When the enemy of your salvation assails you with temptations of this sort, recall to your minds the reply of your blessed Saviour recorded in the Gospel: “It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God;” and let the recollection of it induce you to repel them with similar resolution. But there is another mode of attack to which the tempter has occasionally recourse against the followers of Jesus Christ, which he would have employed in vain against their immortal leader, and which the unhappy weakness of the former is apt sometimes to render but too successful; and that too, incredible as it may appear, is occasioned by the elevation to which they are raised by their eminent virtues. For, by tempting them to self-complacency in the contemplation of the eminence on which they stand, as on the pinnacle of the temple, and urging them to look down from it with conscious superiority on



those, whom he would fain persuade them, to be inferior to themselves, he makes them, as it were, dizzy, and thus exposes them to imminent danger of tumbling headlong from their exalted station into the dreadful gulph of spiritual pride. It becomes you, therefore, my pious friends, to secure yourselves as much as possible against this fatal vertigo, which the enemy attempts to promote within you ; and for that purpose you will do well, instead of standing erect in the contemplation of your virtues, to prostrate yourselves, as it were, on the ground, with a deep sense of your own unworthiness ; and deeply penetrated with a consciousness of your weakness, and with the humiliating recollection of your past failings, to implore with fervor the assistance of Heaven to guard you against the dangers of your own virtues.

The last temptation resorted to by the devil against the Son of God, in which he endeavoured by an ostentatious display of the kingdoms of the earth with all their glory, and by a promise to put him in possession of them, to prevail upon him to fall down and adore him, is a lively image of the arts which he practises against the votaries of Christianity to draw them from the worship of the living God, and to gain them over to the adoration of himself. For by raising in their minds extravagant estimations of the goods of earth, which he displays to their imaginations in the most captivating colors, by exciting in them a decided preference of things temporal to things that are



eternal, he renders such the principal objects of their affections. And thus causing them, in the language of the Apostle, “to be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, to seek the praise of men more than the praise of God,” and to be more anxious to amass the perishable riches of earth, than “to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume;” he actually persuades them to transfer to himself, under these different emblems, that supreme homage of their attachment, which is exclusively due to the Creator, who is blessed for ever more. This certainly must be acknowledged to be a species of adoration. But do not you, my friends, permit yourselves to be the wretched dupes of such artifices. Do not you be so weak as to suffer the light and momentary enjoyments of the present time, to outweigh, in your esteem, the incomparably more momentous and durable advantages of a blissful eternity. Endeavour to impress your minds with a just sense of the unsatisfactory nature, the uncertain tenure and transient duration, of all earthly things; and of that immeasurably great, unalterable, and everlasting felicity,—“such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive, which God hath prepared for those who love him.” Receive with thankfulness such temporal blessings as by the divine assistance it may be given to you to possess; use them with moderation, and cherish even, if you please, a subordinate degree of attach-

ment to them ; but let them not hold the first place in your affections. Let them not usurp the sovereignty of your hearts. Should they daringly carry their ambitious pretensions to so extravagant a pitch, reject them without hesitation, as incompatible with your allegiance to the Ruler of the universe, whose prerogative it is to reign unrivalled in his kingdom, which is within you ; imitating, in this respect, the example of your blessed Saviour, who, to the impious proposal of the infernal tempter, peremptorily replied : “ Begone Satan, for it is written ; the Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve.”

The transaction recorded in this day’s Gospel, besides furnishing us with abundant matter of important instruction, supplies us also with considerations of great encouragement. For, since he who was endowed with every virtue in the highest degree of perfection, actually permitted himself to be tempted by the devil, we have hence the completest assurance, that temptation is no disparagement to the highest degree of moral excellence. Be not therefore dejected, my pious friends, if you should also occasionally experience, as he did, the assaults of the enemy. Remember, that it is not in being assailed by temptations, but in yielding to them, that criminality consists. And oh ! with what great and powerful incentives are you presented in the Gospel to resist them with firm and undaunted fortitude. The champion of your salvation has marched before you. Yes, he has

marched before into the field of combat. You have seen him grappling with that self-same foe with whom it is your lot at present to contend. You have beheld him victorious in every encounter; and you have only to imitate his example, to be yourselves triumphant in the mighty contest. Let not your apprehensions of the force of the enemy, or the consciousness of your own weakness, appal or dispirit you. "For greater," as St. John informs you, "is he that is in you, than he that is against you." And whatever may be the deficiency of your natural strength, it will be abundantly supplied by those supernatural succours, which you will not fail to obtain, provided you sue for them with earnestness and perseverance. Imitate then, my friends, imitate the example of your immortal chief who has gone before you. Prepare yourselves, as he did, for the contest, by retirement and self-denial. Put forth all the energies of your souls in repelling the attacks of your foe. As St. James admonishes, "resist the devil, and he will fly from you."—"Draw nigh to God," in compliance with the advice of the same Apostle, "and he will draw nigh to you." Fix steadfastly your eyes on the glorious prize which will be the certain reward of your successful efforts. Thus, while you have the example of your Lord to animate you, the invincible power of divine grace to support you, and an eternity of happiness hereafter to remunerate you, what is there upon earth, or even in hell itself, to damp your ardor; or to



shake your constancy. Nothing, my friends, nothing.

“Watch ye, therefore,” as the Apostle of the Gentiles exhorts, “stand fast in the faith, do manfully, and be strengthened.” Consider, moreover, that the conflict in which you are engaged, will soon be at an end; that a few years at most will bring it to a conclusion; and that then you will have the satisfaction of being able to exclaim with St. Paul, in transports of delight: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just judge, will render to me at that day.” (2 TIM. c. iv. v. 7, 8.)



## SERMON XII.

### THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

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#### ON THE TRANSFIGURATION.

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GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, xvii. v. 1-9. At that time Jesus took Peter and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart; and he was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as snow; and behold there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with him. And Peter answering, said to Jesus, Lord it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias; and as he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them; and lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And the disciples hearing, fell upon their face, and were very much afraid; and Jesus came and touched them, and said to them, Arise, and fear not. And they lifting up their eyes, saw no one, but only Jesus. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of man be risen from the dead.

How truly grand and magnificent must have been the spectacle displayed to the view of the three chosen Apostles, as it is recorded by *St. Matthew* in this day's Gospel. Image to yourselves, my friends, the blessed Jesus stationed on the summit of a high mountain, and exhibiting, by the splendour and majesty of his appearance, that wonderful change in the figure of his person, to which the appellation of his transfiguration has for that

reason been given. Conceive him, in this refulgent form, attended at the same time by Moses and Elias, who, as St. Luke relates, appeared also in glory, and who testified by their presence, the validity of his pretensions to the character of Messiah, prefigured and foretold by the law and by the prophets, of which those two distinguished personages may fairly be considered to have been the appointed representatives. Well indeed might St. Peter, on an occasion like this, exclaim emphatically, in an extasy of admiration, "It is good for us to be here." Well might he express a wish to remain in a situation from which he experienced such inconceivable delight. And oh! with what sentiments of reverential awe must they have beheld the bright cloud descending from above majestically upon them, encompassing them around with a luminous shade; and, in the language of the Psalmist, "clothing them with light as with a garment." But above all, when from the midst of that resplendent cloud, they heard their divine Master proclaimed with solemnity, the beloved Son of the Most High, and a command to obey his authoritative mandates distinctly issued! Is it surprising that these apostles, hearing and seeing what they heard and saw, should have fallen prostrate to the ground? is it surprising that they should have sunk beneath the weight of feelings, which circumstances of such unparalleled splendour and magnificence were calculated to excite? But what think you must

have been their sentiments, when roused from their stupor by the touch of their divine Master, and lifting up their eyes, they saw no vestige remaining of that splendid scene, on which they had gazed before in such raptures of admiration,—but Jesus alone, in his usual form, presenting himself to their sight? Was it not natural for them to conclude, that what they had beheld, was a scenic representation of that new dispensation which their divine Master had come upon the earth to introduce? Was it not obvious to infer, that as Moses and Elias had both disappeared, and Jesus alone remained, so the law and the prophets, of which Moses and Elias might be considered as the representatives, were to yield their place to the covenant established by that august legislator of the New Testament, whom they were commanded to hear. “Hear ye him.” Was it not natural, moreover, for them to be reconciled to the ignominious and cruel treatment, which Jesus had informed them, that both himself and his followers were destined to endure, when the glorious issue of their sufferings and tribulations was depicted to them in such striking colors, in the splendour which invested both himself and his chosen servants, when he was transfigured before them? Yes, my friends, such it may be presumed, were the impressions made on the minds of these three Apostles; and such appear to have been the designed effects of the transfiguration of our divine Redeemer. It was to reconcile them, it is proba-



ble, in the first place, to the temporary sufferings which both Jesus and themselves were doomed to undergo, by the encouraging prospect of that future glory by which they would be succeeded; and to intimate to them, in the next place, that as he who was in reality the end of the law, and the object of the predictions of preceding prophets, had now made his appearance upon the earth, the function of both had ceased, and that Christianity, unmixed with Judaism, was the sole religion which it behoved them to announce, to practice, and to propagate. But as the minds of the Jews were not yet prepared for a full disclosure of this last injunction, he cautioned his three select Apostles not to make known the event which represented it, till after the period of his resurrection from the tomb. “And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, tell the vision to no man, till the Son of man be risen from the dead.”

The glorious scene of the transfiguration of our Lord, and the effects which it appears to have been intended to produce on the minds of the three Apostles who were permitted to witness it, are applicable to Christians of every age and nation. Yes, my friends, to you it is also given to behold that magnificent spectacle of the transfiguration of the blessed Jesus, which the Apostles contemplated with such rapturous emotions of astonishment and delight, and that too accompanied with circumstances of an incomparably more



stupendous and ravishing description than those which offered themselves to *their* sight. Lift up then the eyes of your minds, O ye elect of God; look attentively through the perspective of faith, on that heavenly mountain which presents itself to you from above, and you will enjoy the spectacle of a transfiguration of your Divine Saviour, far exceeding that, both in splendour and interest, which was exhibited to the three Apostles on the earthly mount. You will there behold him seated at the right hand of his Eternal Father, with a majesty and grandeur infinitely surpassing the brightest scene of his earthly existence, and distinguished by an assemblage of captivating charms which cannot fail to inspire every attentive spectator with sentiments of the most pure and exalted satisfaction. You will behold in his countenance, not only as the Apostles did, “a brightness resembling that of the sun,” but the very splendour of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his substance, beaming forth with the full effulgence of the Divinity. The garment with which he will be seen clothed, is that of his incorruptible, immortal, and glorified body, with which the garments, white as snow, as they are described in the Gospel, are not worthy to be compared. You will there see him attended not only by Moses and Elias, but by myriads of pure and celestial beings, outshining far in glory those illustrious representatives of the law and of the prophets, when they made their appearance with Jesus on the moun-

tain, and exhilarating your hearts with the matchless exhibition of their boundless happiness. You will have the satisfaction also to observe him employed in offices productive to you of unspeakable advantage. You will there discover him constantly occupied as your great High Priest, Intercessor, and Advocate, in sprinkling, as it were, the mercy seat within the inward sanctuary of the highest heavens, with that precious blood which he poured out for your redemption on the altar of the cross, satisfying the rigorous demands of justice by the superabundant compensation of his infinite merits, and pleading irresistibly for mercy in your behalf. You will there descry him as your omnipotent protector, helper, and comforter, defending you from the dangers to which you are exposed, aiding you in the difficulties you may have to encounter, and consoling you under the afflictions of your earthly pilgrimage. Surely, my friends, a scene like this, a scene of such unrivalled grandeur and felicity, is well calculated to excite in your hearts the most rapturous feelings of admiration and delight, and to prompt you to exclaim with St. Peter in the Gospel, "it is good for us to be here."

Yet you must not always be here, my friends; you must not be for ever engaged in these heavenly contemplations. That would be inconsistent with the various duties of your respective callings. Occasional contemplations, however, of this description must certainly be allowed to be of the highest moment, since they serve to comfort, to

encourage, and invigorate you under the troubles and hardships which may fall to your lot in your journey through life; which was one great end for which the Apostles were favored with the manifestation of the glory of their Divine Master. Who in reality can meditate with a strong and lively faith on a scene like that of which I have given you an imperfect sketch, without feeling the effects of its celestial influence? Who will suffer his veneration and love for his gracious Redeemer, to be at all diminished by the insults, sneers, and blasphemies, with which conceited infidels, and licentious profligates, like the Jews of old, impiously assail his sacred character, when he contemplates him seated on the throne of his majesty, encompassed with unbounded splendour and magnificence? Or, who will permit the constancy of his adherence to the cause of his Divine Master, to be in any degree shaken by the obloquy, contempt, or ridicule, which he may possibly experience from the enemies of truth and virtue, when he reflects on that inconceivable glory and happiness which are now enjoyed by the faithful adherents of that master in the realms of bliss, many of whom were, in the days of their mortality, exposed to similar or greater outrages? What gloom so dense can overspread the mind, which such a mighty blaze of glory is not able to dispel? What sorrow so deep, which a spectacle so cheering is not competent to assuage? What burthen so heavy, which the firm assurance of such powerful assist-



ance will not encourage a man to bear with vigour and alacrity? Should the vanities of the world tempt you to deviate from the path of righteousness, which leads to eternal life, the recollection of the permanent and boundless happiness of the just made perfect, which the elevation of your minds to the mountain of God in the heavenly Jerusalem, shall have presented to your view, will cause you to resist their fascinating allurements. Should you feel depressed by the weight of your transgressions, and tremble under the apprehension of the dreadful scourge of God's avenging justice, the consideration of the efficacy of the merits of your Redeemer, who has entered with his blood into the sanctuary of heaven, and of his powerful advocacy at the throne of mercy, where he is always present, to plead your cause, and to support your interests, will raise, by its influence, your drooping spirits, and restore tranquillity to your agitated minds. Should the consciousness of your weakness alarm your fears, or should you be apprehensive that the temptations by which you may be assailed may exceed your strength, you will look up with confidence to that powerful auxiliary, who is always ready to furnish you with succour adequate to your wants, when you apply to him for it in proper dispositions. And knowing, from the express declaration of St. Paul, that "power is made perfect in infirmity," and that "when you are weak, then you are powerful," the very sense of your weakness will cause you to feel strong in the con-



templation of the aid of Christ's omnipotence. Far from being dejected by the hardships and afflictions which you may have to undergo, you will exult in them, on the contrary, like the Apostle of the Gentiles, as marks of your predestination to eternal bliss; knowing as you do from holy writ, that "the sufferings of this present time, momentary and light, work for you above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory, and that they are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come which shall be revealed in you."

The consideration, moreover, of the original nature of those glorious and happy beings who are now raised to such a state of exaltation, and the circumstances in which they were once engaged, will operate as a most powerful stimulative to your minds, and contribute to give energy to your exertions. For of whom, you will say, is "that great multitude composed, which no man can number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands?" (Apoc. c. vii. v. 9.) Are they not all descended from the same stock from which I also derive my origin? Were they not all partakers of the like flesh and blood? Were they not all conceived and born in sin? Did they not all inherit, from one common parent, a similar unhappy propensity to evil? Were they not likewise, as we now are, poor, debilitated, exiled children of Eve? Had they not difficulties and dangers to

contend with, in magnitude at least, equal to those which I may have to encounter? But did they shrink from them with ignoble fear? Did they allow a dispiriting conviction of their infirmity to reduce them to a state of heartless despondency? oh! no. The conviction of their infirmity inspired them, indeed, it is true, with sentiments of humility. But it did not discourage them. It did not occasion a relaxation of their exertions, nor did it urge them to despair of success. Sensible of the insufficiency of their natural strength, they had recourse for succour to the mighty force of that invincible arm which "hath put down the powerful from their seat, and hath exalted the humble." Aided by that supernatural assistance, they surmounted every obstacle which opposed their progress in their career of righteousness, they finished the course which they were commanded to run, and are now in possession of the crown of justice promised to be the reward of their persevering efforts. And why should not I, you will add, why should not I be able to do what they have done? Why should I be intimidated by difficulties which they have overcome? Have not I the same prospects which they had of a blissful immortality, to excite my ardor? Have I not the same promise of assistance from above to invigorate my exertions? Have I not, moreover, in the knowledge of their success, a powerful motive to imitate their example? Deeply penetrated with these reflections, instigated by these strong and animating

incentives, I will henceforth, as the Apostle of the Gentiles exhorts, “press forward to the mark, undaunted and undismayed, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Such, my friends, in the first place, are the reflections which obviously arise from the transfiguration of our Lord, considered as designed to counteract, by its influence, the injurious impressions which the cruel and ignominious treatment about to be experienced by themselves, as well as by their divine Master, would naturally make on the weak minds of the Apostles. I am now about to view it as a representation of the abolition of the Mosaic dispensation, in consequence of the introduction of the more perfect dispensation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to draw from it, in that point of view, such observations as it will obviously suggest.

It is stated in the Gospel, that, whilst Peter was expressing to his divine Master, the satisfaction which he felt on this memorable occasion, and proposing to him that the situation in which they then were, should be the fixed settlement of their permanent abode, a bright cloud overshadowed the scene of glory which he had just witnessed, that a voice from the cloud was distinctly heard, saying, “this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him;” and that on the recovery of the Apostles from the state of stupefaction into which they had been thrown by the wonderful things which they had seen and



heard, the magnificent spectacle had totally disappeared, and that Jesus alone presented himself to their sight, and he too, it is to be presumed, in his ordinary form. It is unnecessary that I should undertake to shew how naturally, on the one hand, the disappearance of these two great representatives of the Law and of the Prophets, together with the whole of that splendid apparatus which accompanied their presence, was emblematical of the termination of the Mosaic economy, with all its pomp and parade of ceremony; and how strikingly, on the other hand, the continuance of Jesus, whom the voice from the cloud commanded them to hear, intimated that the more perfect dispensation of the Gospel was to be substituted in its place. The circumstances themselves must speak more intelligibly to every attentive mind, than any words which I might possibly use to elucidate these two important points. I shall therefore proceed, without further delay, to deduce from them such remarks as may be conducive to the promotion of your spiritual interests. "The law," says St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, "having a shadow of good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never make those who come thereunto perfect." (HEB. c. x. v. 1.) What the Apostle says of the law of Moses, may with propriety be applied to the law of nature. By the law of nature I mean that innate moral sense inscribed by the Great Creator on the heart of man, which prompts him irresist-



ibly to make a distinction between virtue and vice, to approve of the one, and to condemn the other, to feel satisfaction from the consciousness of the former, and to suffer remorse from that of the latter. For "when," observes the Apostle, "the Gentiles who have not the law, do by nature the things that are of the law, these having not the law, are a law to themselves: who shew the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them, and their thoughts between themselves accusing, or also defending one another." (Rom. c. ii. v. 14, 15.) Now, this law of our nature necessarily implies the existence of a great moral Governor, from whom it must have emanated. And since the goods and evils of this life are promiscuously distributed amongst the righteous and the wicked, it also points out an hereafter, or a posthumous state of being in which this apparent disorder will be rectified, in which virtue will receive its just reward, and vice its condign punishment. But this law of our nature has been so obscured by the corruption of the human heart, that the essential difference between good and evil, the reality of a future state of existence, and even the very existence of a Supreme Being who made and rules the universe, have become subjects of doubtful speculation. With reason, therefore, may it be said, that the law of nature, like that of Moses, "is no more than a shadow of good things to come, and that it can not make those who come thereunto perfect."

And hence is it highly proper that it should give way to the resplendent luminary of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which "has brought life and immortality to light," which communicates the most certain and authentic intelligence concerning heavenly things, and furnishes us with the most ample and satisfactory instructions for the regulation of our conduct.

With respect to the predictions of the ancient prophets, they also had the Messiah for their object. When therefore they were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, that object was attained, and consequently their office was then at an end. Hence, St. Peter explicitly says, "we have also the more firm prophetic word; whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts." (2 PET. *c. i. v. 19.*) The suggestions of human reason, like the predictions of the prophets, conduct us in a similar manner to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, by the strong, cogent, and convincing arguments which they address to our understandings. But, that end having been once accomplished, the functions of reason cease. The day dawn of faith having risen in our hearts, the light of reason must be made to disappear, like that of the stars before the rising sun. And the light of the law of nature, and of human reason, like that of the law of Moses, and of the ancient prophets, being merged, as it were, in the effulgence of the Gospel, we must not hesitate to

expand our souls to the full blaze of its divine illumination. In obedience, in short, to the voice which issued from the cloud, we must listen exclusively to Jesus Christ. "Hear ye him."

But how, it may be asked, are we to hear him? How are we to be made acquainted with his heavenly mandates? Why, he has told you himself, my friends, in what manner you are to proceed in order to acquire this valuable information. He has told you, you must have recourse to the governors of his Church, upon whom he has promised to send down his Holy Spirit to abide with them perpetually to the end of time. He has told you, that in hearing them, you hear him. "He who heareth you, heareth me." It is by listening therefore to them with docility and respect, that you are to learn the instructions of your divine Master, contained in holy writ, and not by the dictates of private judgment, which may lead you into the most gross and palpable errors.

Remember also, my friends, that when you are commanded to hear the Son of God, speaking to you by the lips of his ministers, it is not merely that you may acquire a knowledge of his sacred injunctions, but that you may render, moreover, your conduct conformable to them. It is not only that you may be hearers of the word, as St. James observes, but doers also. For such alone, says the same Apostle, "are blessed in their deeds." But is your attention to the divine word of this description? Is it accompanied with a cor-



responding influence on your conduct? Does it make you punctual in performing your daily exercises of devotion, and in discharging your duty of public worship? Does it cause you to be watchful over the motions of your hearts, to curb the impetuosity of your passions, to smooth the asperities of your tempers, and to mortify by the spirit the lusts of the flesh? Does it operate as a restraint on the licentiousness of your tongues, and counteract the malignity of your censorious dispositions? Does it inspire you with patience, under all the afflictions, vexations, and troubles, which may fall to your lot, and render you kind, meek, affable, and unassuming, to all with whom you may be engaged in social intercourse? Do you never relax the severity of its precepts, to accommodate them to the propensities of corrupt nature, or allow its maxims to be superseded in your hearts by the unhallowed principles of worldly policy? These circumstances, my friends, demand your serious consideration: for your blessed Saviour has himself assured you, that though they, who through ignorance, transgress his ordinances, "Shall be punished with but a few stripes, yet they who know his will, and do it not, shall be punished with many stripes."

Awed, therefore by the salutary fear of so rigorous a penalty, encouraged by the prospect of that boundless happiness, of which I presented you with an imperfect representation, in the former part of this instruction, and animated, above all,



by that still more perfect and sublime motive of divine love, resolve, henceforward, to make the sacred word of the Son of God, constantly and universally the rule of your conduct; and you may rest assured, that as he exhibited himself in glory to his Apostles on the Mount, so he will manifest himself hereafter to you, with incomparably superior magnificence and splendour, in the kingdom of his heavenly Father, and ravish your souls with inexpressible delight. “For he,” said he to his Apostles, the night before his passion, “that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. And he that loveth me shall be loved by my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” (JOHN, *c.* xiv. *v.* 21.)

## SERMON XIII.

## THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

## ON CONVERSION AND RELAPSE.

GOSPEL. *St. Luke*, xi. v. 14-28. At that time Jesus was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb, and when he had cast out the devil the dumb spoke, and the multitude were in admiration at it; but some of them said, he casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils. And others tempting, asked of him a sign from heaven; but he seeing their thoughts, said to them, Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and house upon house shall fall; and if Satan shall be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because you say, that through Beelzebub I cast out devils. Now if I cast out devils by Beelzebub, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I by the finger of God cast out devils, doubtless the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his court, those things which he possesses are in peace; but if a stronger than he come upon him, and overcome him, he will take away all his armour wherein he trusted, and will distribute his spoils. He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through places without water, seeking rest: and not finding, he saith, I will return into my house whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in they dwell there; and the last state of that man cometh worse than the first. And it came to pass as he spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to him, Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breasts that gave thee suck. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.

It appears from this day's Gospel, that our blessed Saviour had, by his divine power, restored to a

poor dumb man the faculty of speech, of which he is stated to have been deprived by the operation of the devil. This miracle, as well it might, excited in the minds of all who beheld it, the greatest astonishment. "And the multitude," says the sacred text, "were in admiration at it." The Pharisees, who were jealous of the growing reputation of Jesus among the people, perceiving the impression which so wonderful a prodigy had made upon their minds, and unable, at the same time, to deny its reality, had recourse to the expedient of impiously ascribing it to the preternatural agency of the prince of darkness. "But some of them said, this man casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils." Whilst others, with a design equally malicious, demanded of him that extraordinary sign from heaven, which, from a passage in the prophet Daniel, they conceived to be peculiarly characteristic of the Messiah. "And others," continues the text, "asked of him a sign from heaven." To this request Jesus did not think proper to pay any attention. But with respect to the wicked and blasphemous pretence, which attributed the cure he had miraculously performed, to the power of the devil, as it might tend to counteract the success of his own mission, by the unfavorable impression which it might possibly produce on the minds of the multitude, to *that* he deemed it advisable to make a distinct reply,—a reply which must certainly be allowed, by every candid and impartial mind, to have been

a complete confutation of so infamous a charge. It was this :—" Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and house shall fall upon house ; and if Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand ?" The strength and import of this sententious argument may be thus elucidated. It can not surely be supposed that the devil would take an active part in the subversion of his own empire. This, however, he would unquestionably do, if he enabled Christ to expel his agents from the posts of which they had taken possession. He would become a confederate with his most decided and irreconcilable enemy, in promoting the interests of truth and virtue, which Jesus laboured indefatigably to advance, and which are diametrically opposite to his own interest ; and thus, like a kingdom divided against itself, or a house which is a prey to internal discord, his dominion would unavoidably experience its downfall. Our blessed Saviour then proceeded, with his usual address, to turn against themselves the very arms which they had employed for his defeat. For he intimated that the pretence which they urged against him, would also, if admitted, militate against those, who, amongst themselves, exercised the power of casting out devils, and whom they were accustomed to hold in the highest veneration. He therefore confidently appealed to *them* to decide, by what influence *they* succeeded in that extraordinary operation, claiming in his own regard, as



in equity he well might, the advantage of the decision which they should give in answer to that appeal. Thus, leaving the point at issue between them to the determination of their own exorcists, and anticipating a verdict in his favor, he fairly concluded that it was by the power of God, and not by that of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, as the Pharisees pretended, that he had restored speech to the dumb man, whence it followed that his mission was clearly from above. "Now if I cast out devils by Beelzebub, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I by the finger of God cast out devils, doubtless the kingdom of God is come upon you." Far from acting, either in concert with, or in subordination to, the prince of darkness, he asserted at once his opposition and superiority to him. In proof of which he represented to them the devil, under the image of an armed warrior, guarding the fortress in which all his treasures were deposited, with vigilance and strength, and retaining undisturbed possession, till attacked and defeated by our Saviour's superior force; as in the instance of his expulsion from the dumb man, he was constrained to abandon his strong-hold, and despoiled of all the effects which it contained. "When a strong man armed guardeth his court, those things which he possesseth are in peace, but if a stronger than he come upon him, and overcome him, he will take away all his armour wherein he trusted, and will distribute his spoils." Finally,

reminding them of the proverb, which appears to have been current among them, "he that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth;"—which implied, that not to defend was to oppose,—that neutrality was to be regarded as constructive hostility,—he left them to consider, if the decided opposition which he, by his conduct, had uniformly manifested to error and vice, could possibly be viewed in any other light than that of the most unequivocal and avowed enmity to *him* who was the chief promoter of both, and by whose influence they pretended that he had acted.

Having thus repelled in the most victorious manner the horrid imputation of the blasphemous Pharisees, he delivered the parable of the unclean spirit; who, having abandoned his human habitation, finding it afterwards swept and garnished, as it is described in the text, returns with a reinforcement of others more wicked than himself, who establish in it their permanent abode, and thus render the condition of the soul in which they fix their residence, more wretched than it was before. This parable I conceive to be connected with the miracle which Jesus had performed, and designed to caution all those who, like the dumb man in the Gospel, may have the happiness to be delivered from the slavery of the devil, against every indulgence of vicious propensities, which may induce him to return with augmented force, and reduce them to a state of aggravated servitude. That the

solemn, dignified, and convincing language, which Jesus held on the present occasion, must have greatly contributed to exalt his character in the estimation of all who heard him, there cannot be a doubt. Of this indeed, there is a remarkable instance given in the Gospel. It is that of a woman, herself, probably a mother, who, in order to express her admiration of him, adverted to that exquisite, and sentimental satisfaction, which a mother only could feel, in having given birth to such a son. "Blessed," said she, "is the womb that bore thee, and the breasts which thou didst suck." But to this spontaneous burst of maternal feeling, Jesus calmly replied in words which indicated his preference of the blessing derived from a faithful observance of the commands of God, to that which is the result of the finest feelings of natural sensibility: "But he said, yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it."

The Gospel which I have thus expounded to you, furnishes us, in the first place, with an unanswerable argument against modern infidels, who call in question the miraculous power of the Divine founder of our holy religion. That Jesus had operated a most extraordinary cure in restoring to a dumb man the faculty of speech, is evident, from the astonishment it excited in the minds of all who beheld it. "And the multitude," observes the sacred text, "were in admiration at it." That the Pharisees, who were his bitterest and most determined enemies, were unable to dispute so



notorious a transaction, is clear also from the anxiety they expressed to remove the impression which it produced in his favor. That they could not shew it to have been the work of fraud, of artifice, collusion, or any other human means, is equally certain. For could they have done this, could they have proved, that in the cure which Jesus had performed, there was nothing that exceeded the limits of natural ability, is it credible they would have had recourse to so miserable a subterfuge to put down his reputation in the estimation of the multitude, as that of attributing it to the infernal interposition of the prince of darkness? a subterfuge, which Jesus, with his accustomed sagacity, so triumphantly refuted. Here then, we have the most unexceptionable testimony to the reality of that supernatural power which the votaries of Christianity ascribe with confidence to its Divine Author. For it is the testimony of men who were themselves eye witnesses to the exercise of it, and who, with the most ample means, must also have had the strongest dispositions to disprove it, if possible. Now, which of the two, may I be permitted to ask, are the more deserving of attention, and credit, the contemporaneous enemies of Jesus, who saw with their own eyes the actual display of his supernatural power,—a power, which the irresistible evidence of their senses, compelled them reluctantly to confess,—or they, who at the present day, that is to say, 1800 years later, obstinately persist in denying



it, without any evidence whatsoever to justify their denial.

Having made these few preliminary remarks on the first part of the Gospel, I will now proceed to the consideration of the subsequent parable. The desertion of his habitation by the unclean spirit, and his return to it when swept and garnished, are lively images of what takes place in the soul of a sinner, both on his return to God, and on his relapse into sin. When engaged in the pursuit of his vicious career, the light of heaven, like that which flashed on the eyes of St. Paul on his road to Damascus, breaks in upon his mind, and a voice too not unlike to that which was heard by the Apostle on the same occasion, saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me," speaks inwardly to him by the feelings of remorse, reproaching him with the turpitude of his criminal disorders. Awakened thus by the influence of divine grace to a sense of his condition, he looks at it attentively through the medium of faith, and oh! what a ghastly and disgusting spectacle presents itself to his view! He beholds with horror the noblest faculties of his mind degraded to the most ignoble purposes, his affections prostituted to unworthy objects, and his whole soul covered as it were throughout with a loathsome leprosy. He reflects on the transient and unsatisfactory character of the sinful pleasures, for the enjoyment of which, he has reduced himself to such a melancholy and deplorable state. He

contemplates with dread that dismal dungeon of everlasting woe denounced against the workers of iniquity. And the consideration of the anger of that Omnipotent Being whom he has offended by his transgressions, fills him with dismay. In this agitated state of his mind, like the Apostle of the Gentiles, who, as is related in the Acts of the Apostles, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts, c. 9. v. 6.) he raises his heart to heaven, and begs to be directed to the course which he is to pursue, in order to be delivered from his lamentable condition. And as Paul was admonished to go into the City, where he was assured he should receive, as he did, from Ananias, every necessary instruction for the regulation of his conduct, so the sinner is likewise instigated by the inward suggestions of divine grace, to repair without delay for the same purpose to the minister of consolation. Mindful of the example of his Divine Master, that compassionate friend of sinners, the minister of God listens with attention to his tale of woe, sympathizes with him in the anguish of his troubled mind, and without affecting to palliate or disguise the real character and danger of his situation, points out to him a resource, which if duly resorted to, will enable him effectually to extricate himself from it. That resource, is the boundless mercy of the very being whom he has offended, which, if penetrated with sentiments of penitential sorrow, he earnestly solicit it, through

the infinite merits of him who died for his offences, he is assured will be graciously conceded to him. Encouraged by this comfortable and animating assurance, he avails himself of it without delay ; prostrates himself with humility before the throne of mercy, bewails with compunction his past disloyalties to his eternal sovereign, renews to him with sincerity his solemn professions of future allegiance, and in compliance with his injunction, lays open his conscience to the minister of reconciliation, who, in the capacity of ambassador of the Great Peace-maker between God and man, pronounces the sentence of pardon in his behalf, and restores him once more to the divine favor. Oh ! what an admirable, what a blessed revolution has now taken place in the soul of the repenting sinner ! No longer does he feel within him the pangs of remorse, which before destroyed his inward quiet. No longer does he start back with disgust and horror from the contemplation of his disordered conscience. No longer is he appalled by the terrific prospect of God's avenging justice, and of the punishments prepared for incorrigible delinquents. Oh ! no. Nothing of all this is now remaining to wound his feelings, or to disturb his repose. His mind is now the seat of tranquillity and order. Reason, enlightened by faith, has resumed within him its legitimate sway. It sits enthroned in the centre of his heart, and exercises by its authority a just control over its subject passions. On whatever side he casts his eyes, he



is gratified with scenes of exquisite delight. The ravages which had been committed by his rebellious appetites have all disappeared, and he has the satisfaction to behold his renovated soul, calm, placid, and serene, and exhibiting throughout the choicest ornaments of heavenly virtues. To the pleasure which he derives from this satisfactory state of his own mind, is added that which arises from the consideration of the relation in which he stands to the Supreme, and of the destiny which awaits him beyond the grave. Having been happily reconciled to his father who is in heaven, and restored to the privileges of his adopted children, he lives with security under the divine protection, and looks forward with exultation to the period of his dissolution, when his fidelity will be rewarded with a profusion of blessings, "such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive." Such, my friends, is the happy change which fails not to take place in the soul of a sinner, when he abandons the way of iniquity, and returns with sincerity into the path of righteousness.

No wonder that the devil, like the unclean spirit in the parable, should relinquish a dwelling, which must now be necessarily so offensive to him. No wonder that he should make a precipitate retreat from a habitation embellished with those celestial graces, which must unavoidably be so displeasing to the eye of a being, who delights in nothing but



moral deformity. Accordingly, like the unclean spirit, who is stated in the parable, to exchange his situation for dry places without water, through which he walketh seeking rest, he immediately deserts a residence which, from the alteration it has undergone, is now become so hateful to him, and seeks repose in places more congenial to his malicious disposition. Yes, he seeks it in the souls of unrepenting sinners ; where, roaming as it were in splenetic mood over those dry and barren deserts, and looking around with savage joy on the dreary waste which presents itself to his view, where not a single virtue is seen to bloom, nor a solitary spring of celestial grace is anywhere discovered to refresh the weary traveller on his journey, he endeavours to indemnify himself for his temporary banishment from a situation to which he flatters himself that he shall shortly be furnished with an opportunity of returning. Unfortunately his expectations are but too frequently realized. For in quitting an abode become insupportable to the malignity of his nature, he directs his agents to employ their artifices to subvert, if possible, the new order of things which has been introduced, and to plunge it again into its former anarchy. Those agents are the allurements of the world, and the corrupt propensities of the human heart. And when, by the success of their combined machinations, he finds at length his object attained ; when making his round, “ like a roaring lion,” as he is described by the Apostle, “ seeking whom he may

devour," he sees the house that was "swept and garnished thrown into disorder;" when he beholds the fair and lovely forms of the numerous virtues which adorned the soul of the repentant sinner, dashed, as it were, from their pedestals, like so many beautiful statues, broken in pieces, and swept contemptuously, like so much rubbish, from their sacred repository, and the hideous figure of opposite vices occupying their places; when he perceives humility succeeded by pride, continency by lust, meekness by anger, and by hatred charity, then accompanied by his associates in wickedness, does he rush with precipitation into the desecrated mansion, and render its condition more miserable than it was before. "Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in, they dwell there, and the last state of that man cometh worse than the first."

This, my friends, is a true description of the stratagems employed by the principle of evil (and unhappily they are but too often successful) to cause the poor unfortunate sinner to relapse insensibly into his former transgressions. Not being able to maintain his station in a soul which is become the temple of the Holy Spirit, he endeavours by the agency of the inclinations of corrupt nature, and of the temptations of worldly honors, riches and pleasures, to draw it by degrees into a course of action which may induce the Holy Spirit to abandon it, and thus enable him to recover his

deserted post. By the insidious artifices of these infernal agents, the converted sinner is first of all led imperceptibly to relax in his usual vigilance ; the consequence of which is, that the passions begin to renew their operations. These operations, however, are conducted with such secrecy and silence, as not to excite the smallest alarm. They produce nevertheless their effect upon the soul. They gradually diminish its relish for heavenly contemplations. They render it less susceptible of spiritual impressions, and therefore occasion it to be less fervent and assiduous in the practice of religious duties. In the same proportion as prayer is neglected, the supply of supernatural succour, which is imparted only to those who earnestly apply for it, is of course withheld. And thus being insensibly debilitated by the passions which work in secret, and which acquire additional strength from the progressive diminution of resistance which is opposed to them, and being destitute at the same time through its own neglect of adequate assistance from above, it is assailed from without by the corrupt maxims and practices of the world, which, acting in concert with the treacherous enemies who betray it from within, succeed at length in producing in it a sense of disorder, which is inconsistent with the sanctity of the august presence of the spirit of God. He abandons it therefore to Satan, and to his infernal crew ; who immediately take possession of it, and reduce it to a state of the most degrading servitude. Oh ! what



a melancholy alteration in its condition, is the soul of the poor unfortunate sinner thus doomed to experience ! The temple of the Living God converted into a den of wicked spirits ! The fair daughter of Sion, the chaste spouse of Jesus Christ, reduced to the condition of a common harlot ! Such are the images which but too faithfully depicture the dreadful revolution produced in the soul of the relapsing sinner. Well then may the last state of that man be said in the parable to be worse than the first ; since the circumstances which in the first instance made so powerful an impression upon his mind, are not calculated in the second to produce the same effect. He becomes familiar by habit with the light which first awakened him as it were from his lethargy, and roused him to a sense of the wretchedness of his condition. He no longer conceives the same lively notions of the deformity of sin. The terrors of the divine judgments cease to inspire him with the same dread. The rewards promised to God's faithful servants in a future state, present no longer the same attractions to his vacillating mind ; and the more frequent his relapses, the more feeble are the impressions produced by these circumstances.

Such then, my friends, it appears, being the dreadful consequences of the dangerous habit of relapsing into sin ; let me caution you against it with the utmost earnestness. Should you have the happiness to stand, be humble and diffident, and beware lest you fall. But should it be your mis-



fortune to have fallen, apply for succour to the throne of grace, and aided by that supernatural assistance which will be accorded to your solicitations, make a strenuous effort to raise yourselves up again, and to recover your erect attitude. Yet, remember at the same time, that the recovery of that attitude is rendered more difficult by each succeeding relapse, and tremble, lest provoked by your reiterated infidelities, the Almighty in his anger, should abandon you to your weakness; and that thus you should fall at length to rise no more. Be watchful therefore, my friends, be vigorous, be constant. Guard with circumspection the avenues of your souls against the delusive seductions of worldly vanities. Keep your attention fixed on the motions of the traitors that lurk within your bosom, particularly on those of your predominant passion,—and let the strong arm of a firm and energetic government, awe them into inactivity and submission. You brand with dishonor the violator of his engagements with a fellow creature; and what more sacred and solemn engagement than that which you have contracted with your Omnipotent Creator? You reflect with horror on the baseness of the man, who, to gratify a craving appetite, or to serve some selfish purpose, takes part with the enemies of his friend and benefactor, in their opposition to his interests; and where is the friend, where is the benefactor to be compared with him, whose love surpasseth all understanding, and whose boundless benefi-

cence is equal to his love? To what severe restraints, moreover, are you not prepared to submit, what painful sacrifices are you not willing to make, when pronounced to be necessary for the preservation of life? And what comparison is there between the few fleeting years of your earthly existence, and the endless duration of eternity, throughout which your destination will be ultimately determined by the indulgence or mortification of your disorderly appetites? To the felicity of that future state did our blessed Saviour allude, when, to the observation of the woman who exclaimed from the crowd, "blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breast that thou didst suck," he emphatically replied, "Yea, even blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it." Great, unquestionably must have been the happiness of the Virgin Mother of the World's Redeemer, in being the parent of such a son. Great indeed must be the happiness of every mother who has the satisfaction to contemplate the expanding virtues of her darling child; and what child that loves his mother (and where is the child that does not love his mother?) would not wish by his virtuous conduct, to afford her this pure and heartfelt delight, in return for the innumerable benefits which he has experienced from her maternal tenderness. Great, however, as that happiness must undoubtedly be, yet that too, like other earthly blessings, is perishable and evanescent. That in particular of the Holy Virgin, was sorely

compensated by the sword of sorrow which pierced her heart, when she beheld him whom her soul loved, agonizing in torments on the fatal tree. But the happiness of those who walk assiduously in the commandments of the Lord, is not of this precarious and transient nature. No. It is imperishable and eternal. It manifests itself here, in all those delicious fruits of the Holy Spirit, which diffuse over the mind contentment and joy; and it will be experienced hereafter in the more exalted blessings of a blissful immortality. That this happiness may be yours, my friends, is my most sincere wish and earnest prayer, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.



## SERMON XIV.

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

## ON JESUS FEEDING THE MULTITUDE IN THE WILDERNESS

GOSPEL. *St. John*, vi. v. 1-15. At that time, Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is that of Tiberias; and a great multitude followed him, because they saw the miracles which he did on them that were diseased. Jesus therefore went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples, Now the pasch, the festival day of the Jews, was near at hand. When Jesus therefore had lifted up his eyes, and seen that a very great multitude cometh to him, he said to Philip, Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? And this he said to try him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered, two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, saith to him, There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves and two fishes; but what are these among so many? Then Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. The men therefore sat down in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down. In like manner also of the fishes, as much as they would. And when they were filled, he said to his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost. They gathered up therefore, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above to them that had eaten. Now those men, when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said, This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world. Jesus therefore when he knew that they would come to take him by force and make him a king, fled again into the mountain himself alone.

THE Gospel of this Sunday furnishes us with an account of a most illustrious miracle. It is nothing less than that of feeding five thousand men with



five barley loaves and two fishes. Stupendous as this prodigy must certainly appear, our ideas of its importance are enhanced by the consideration that it is the only one, amongst the miracles performed by our blessed Saviour during the whole of his ministry, which all the four evangelists have concurred in recording. It took place, as we are informed by the Gospel, a short time before the Jewish passover. The theatre of its exhibition, was an elevated spot, on which Christ was seated with his twelve apostles. And that elevated spot, as we learn from St. Luke (*c. ix. v. 10*), was situated in a desert, in the neighbourhood of Bethsaida. Thither he proceeded after he had crossed the lake of Tiberias, followed by a great concourse of people, who were allured by the manifestation of that supernatural power, which they had witnessed in the cure of a variety of diseases. Nor did he discover the least displeasure at the intrusion of the multitude into his retreat, nor refuse them access to his sacred person. On the contrary, it is expressly stated by St. Luke, that "he received them, and spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and healed them who had need of healing." His first care, indeed, was to attend to their highest and most important interests. But having done that, having addressed them on the subject of the kingdom of God, he graciously consulted their temporal comfort, by restoring to health those who among them laboured under corporal infirmities. "Healing them," says the sacred text, "who had

need of healing." And when, on the decline of day, he perceived them to be in want of food, the supply of this want became the object of his thoughts. But here a question naturally arose, how were provisions to be procured adequate to the demands of so vast a multitude? And this question he propounded to his apostles in the person of Philip, saying to him, in the words of the Gospel, "whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" It is not, however, to be imagined, that this query on the part of Jesus, proceeded from any embarrassment that he felt respecting the means by which he might accomplish his benevolent design. He was not so ignorant of his own great resources, as to be under the necessity of applying to his apostles for the aid of their advice in the present conjuncture. Oh! no. He knew those resources well; and he had determined also upon the mode in which he should employ them for the attainment of his purpose. When therefore he addressed himself to Philip, to deliver his sentiments on the matter in question, it was not that he needed his opinion, but because he wished to propose a test, by which the quality of his faith, as well as that of the rest of the Apostles, might be clearly ascertained. "And this," adds the Gospel, "he said to try him, for he himself knew what he would do." Yet let it not be thought that even this trial, to which he subjected the faith of Philip and of his associates in the ministry, was resorted to for the purpose of procuring informa-

tion for himself in this respect, as if he were not already acquainted with all that passed within their minds, since "he needed not," says St. John, "that any should give testimony of man; for he knew what was in man." (JOHN, c. ii. v. 25.) The fact was, that it was not for *his*, but for *their* benefit, that he put the question which has been just stated. It was in order that they might be experimentally convinced, that they might be convicted from their own mouths of the weakness of their faith, and thus be more alive to the feelings of self-reproach, when the replies of their infidelity should be completely confounded by the display of his omnipotence. Clearly, indeed, did the answers given by two of his apostles to the question of Jesus, evince the lamentable deficiency of their faith. Philip intimated the matter in contemplation to be altogether impracticable; as he observed, that two hundred pence,\* would not be sufficient to purchase a quantity of food in any degree equal to the wants of so great a multitude. And how, he left it to be inferred, was it to be expected, that provisions to that amount could possibly be procured in the situation in which they then were? "Philip answered him: two hundred penny-worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little." Andrew, indeed, the brother of Peter, informed Jesus, that there was a person among them who had a small stock of provisions in his

\* Upwards of £5 sterling, the Roman denarius or penny being about  $7\frac{1}{2}d.$  of English money.



possession; but this information was accompanied with an observation which evidently indicated his persuasion of its inadequacy to the present demand. "There is a boy here, said he, who hath five barley loaves, and two fishes; but what are these among so many?"

Having thus extorted from them, by so judicious an interrogation, distinct confessions of the infirmity of their belief, he proceeded to the application of a remedy for its cure. This he did, not as when on another occasion, reminding them of the very miracle in this day's Gospel, he reproached them with their inconceivable dulness of comprehension. "Why do ye think within yourselves, O ye of little faith, because you have no bread?" (MATT. c. xvi. v. 8.) Not, as when he upbraided Peter, with his culpable diffidence in the protection of him, by whose command he had ventured to walk on the waters of the deep. "O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?" (MATT. c. xiv. v. 31.) Not, as when he censured Cleophas and that other disciple, on their road to Emmaus, for their difficulty in crediting the truth of his resurrection. "O foolish and slow of heart, to believe in all the things which the prophets have spoken. Did it not behove Christ to suffer these things, and so to enter into his glory?" (LUKE, c. xxiv. v. 25, 26.) No. It was by an appeal to their senses the most forcible and convincing,—it was by a most stupendous display of his mighty power,—it was, in the language of the Psalmist, by laying a table in the



wilderness, and covering that table with a profusion of provisions, more than sufficient to appease the hunger of upwards of five thousand guests,—that he undertook to produce the intended effect. Nor did he, for the accomplishment of this object, resort to the expedient of causing manna to descend from heaven, like that with which the Israelites were nourished during their wanderings in the desert. He attained his end by the very means which Andrew had treated with such apparent contempt. For having ordered the people to seat themselves on the green turf, he took into his venerable hands the five barley loaves, and the two fishes, and, by the divine influence of his efficacious blessing, converted them into a superabundant supply for the wants of the multitude. “And Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed to them who were sitting. In like manner also of the fishes as much as they would.” Of the superabundance of the supply, there cannot be a stronger proof than the fragments which remained after the repast, which were collected together by the command of Jesus, and which actually filled twelve baskets. Thus did our blessed Saviour manifest, with the most splendid and irresistible evidence, the immensity of his power. And that this wonderful transaction had its desired effect on the minds of the Apostles, may fairly be inferred from that which it produced on the promiscuous multitude. For such was the impression which it made upon the latter, that,

in the heat of their enthusiasm they acknowledged him for their Messiah, and wished to compel him to mount the throne of Israel, which they conceived to be destined for that illustrious personage. But as the kingdom of Jesus was not of this world, as it was not by the exertions of the arm of flesh, but by the supernatural influence of grace upon their hearts, that he meant to rule the subjects of his empire, he defeated the project of his enthusiastic admirers by a seasonable retreat. "Then those men when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said ; This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, and make him king, he fled again into the mountain himself alone."

What an admirable history is that of Jesus Christ, which not only in the account it gives of him who is the principle subject of it, but which, in all the subordinate parts and collateral circumstances connected with it, affords such a variety of important instruction ! Let us, my friends, this day, direct particularly our attention to that portion of it contained in the Gospel which I have been expounding to you, and endeavour to draw from it such reflections as may be conducive to the advancement of our spiritual interests. It begins by informing us, that when Jesus had passed the Lake of Tiberias, he was followed by a great concourse of people ; and it also assigns the cause which gave rise to that particular incident. For

it expressly states that cause to have been the wonderful display of supernatural power which he had exhibited in the cure of a diversity of distempers:—"And a great multitude followed him, because they saw the miracles which he did on those that were diseased." A motive, similar to that which induced the Jews to pursue our blessed Saviour into his retreat, should also prompt us to an imitation of their example. Have we not, like them, often seen the marvellous demonstrations of his supernatural power in the frequent cure of a multiplicity of disorders? Have we not, perhaps, had the advantage ourselves of experiencing in our persons its salutary effects? Is not that heavenly physician constantly visiting the hearts of sinners by the influence of his Holy Spirit, and healing the diseases with which they are afflicted? Let us then, my friends, as the Jews did, repair to Jesus in the retirement of solitude, and there raising our thoughts to the holy mount, on which he is now seated, not only, as heretofore, with his disciples, but with an immense assemblage of celestial spirits, let us listen with docility to his divine instructions. The season, like that of the approach of the Jewish passover, which is related in the Gospel to have been near at hand, is peculiarly suitable to this measure, since the time is not far removed, when we shall be called upon by the church to celebrate the festival of the *Christian* passover, for a worthy participation in the blessings of which, a previous attendance on the blessed



Jesus in the solitude of retirement, may well be deemed a becoming preparation. He will there speak to you, my friends, as, according to St. Luke, he did to the Jews, "of the kingdom of God;" he will heal, in like manner, those among you who may "have need of healing;" and when he shall perceive at length within you, that vehement hunger and thirst after justice which his influence will have excited, he will not send you away fasting; but nourishing your souls with that imperishable food of his invigorating grace, which endureth unto everlasting life, he will realize the promise which he solemnly proclaimed in his sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled."

He will speak to you, I say, in the first place, of the kingdom of God. Yes, my friends, he will speak to you of the kingdom of God; that kingdom of God, I mean, which is within you, as he said to the Pharisees, (LUKE, *c.* xvii. *v.* 21) and which consists in the subjection of all the faculties of your minds and hearts, to the sovereign authority of his divine law. He will point out to you a variety of abuses which may have crept insensibly into the government of that kingdom. He will discover to you a multiplicity of defects which hitherto had remained unseen, or at least unnoticed. He will disclose to you the dangers which lurk concealed under the treacherous cover of a delusive tranquillity. He will guard you against the suggestions of evil counsellors, which



tend to the subversion of established order. He will detect the machinations of secret enemies who plot your ruin; and he will teach you how to restore to all its purity, and to preserve unimpaired, the dominion of the living God in your hearts. Yes, my friends, he will do all this. The holy Jesus, when applied to by you, in the retirement of solitude, will do all this. For, when aided in retirement by the light of his grace, you examine carefully the state of your souls, you will observe, it is probable, some habits contracted by them which do not harmonize with the principles of the Gospel. You will perceive, perhaps, that you are sometimes apt to entertain thoughts, or to yield to feelings, which its purity repudiates, or its charity condemns. You will discover irregularities of ungoverned temper, secret antipathies, and inordinate solitudes, which before either eluded your attention, or did not give you the smallest uneasiness. You will find the quiet of your untroubled minds to be the deceitful effects of an erroneous conscience, which says, "peace, peace, where there is no peace." You will acknowledge, perhaps, your apparent ardour in supporting the interests of truth and virtue, to be nothing more than an intemperate warmth, excited by the impulse of prejudice or passion. You will see even the bloom of your fairest virtues in some degree affected by the corrosive influence of pride or vain glory. And you will behold, in their true colors, and in their full magnitude, the tempta-

tions to which you are exposed from the devil, the world, and your corrupt inclinations. Having thus been made acquainted, by your divine monitor, with the real condition of your souls, and with the dangers which threaten them, you will receive from the same source of heavenly wisdom, corresponding directions for the regulation of your conduct. You will be instructed in the measures which it will become you to adopt, to correct the failings which you may have occasion to remark. You will be taught the means of stifling within you the emotions of corrupt nature, so injurious to your virtues. You will learn with what vigilance and careful circumspection it will behove you to watch over the affections of your hearts. And you will be stimulated by motives the most awful and efficacious, by whatever is most calculated to strike the imagination, to convince the understanding, and to affect the heart, by the consideration of the excellence of the cause in which you are engaged, of the supernatural succour promised to you from above, of the self-approving consciousness of present rectitude, and of the animating prospect of future happiness, to oppose a firm and vigorous resistance to all the various assaults of the enemies confederated against you in your spiritual warfare. Thus speaking to you of the kingdom of God, as he did to the Apostles and to the assembled multitude on the mountain in the desert, your divine Master will furnish you with communications of the highest importance in relation to your best and dearest interests.

Moreover, should any among you, as among the crowd that followed Jesus into the wilderness, “have need of healing :”—should any of you labour under spiritual disorders which banish the grace of God from the soul:—should the blindness of error, the dropsy of intemperance, the fever of lust, the palsy of sloth, or the wounds inflicted upon you by revenge, have suspended in you the principle of spiritual animation,—lay open your case to the blessed Jesus, who, as he healed those among the Jews in the wilderness, who “had need of healing,” will confer on you a similar benefit, if you earnestly sue for it in proper dispositions. Yes, my friends, there he is, that heavenly physician, seated aloft on his empyreal mount, ready to impart his medicinal aid to all the distempered children of Adam. There he is, with his efficacious *ephetha*, prepared to restore sight to the blind children of error. There he is, that angel descending with healing on his wings into the pool of Bethesda, moving by his grace the waters produced by the tears of repentance, and rendering them available to the cure of your distempers. There he is, that good Samaritan, with his wine and oil, which he is ready to pour into the gaping wounds of the bleeding traveller, assailed by robbers in his unfortunate journey from the heavenly Jerusalem. There he is, that great high-priest, intercessor, and advocate, appeasing, by the merits of his propitiatory sacrifice, the anger of his eternal Father, provoked against sinners,



and opening, in their behalf, the floodgates of his mercy. He only waits for a fit opportunity of applying with effect the remedies of his goodness to the diseased soul. He only waits till he perceives it to be in a proper state to derive benefit, from the application of them. For, no sooner does he observe it duly prepared for the purpose ; no sooner does he see in it unequivocal marks of a true sense of guilt, of penitential sorrow, and of determinations of amendment ; no sooner does he witness the unaffected sigh, the humble confession, the firm resolve, and the cry that sues for pardon, than he works in it an instantaneous cure, and restores it to health. Now it is by repairing to him in solitude, as the Jews did on the mountain, in the wilderness, that you will acquire the dispositions requisite to render you fit subjects of his medicinal art. For there it is,—it is in the lone retreat, in the privacy of retirement, that those dispositions are most readily engendered. There sin, stripped of its false garb of indulgent allowances, extenuations and excuses, which the passions of worldlings throw around it, to conceal its deformity, will stand confessed to sight in all the nakedness of its intrinsic turpitude. There the world, not viewed, as it too generally is, through the delusive medium of the corrupt propensities, but with the naked eye of dispassionate reflection, will appear in its genuine colors and dimensions. There those earthly objects will be removed, which are apt to contract the mind's horizon ; and



there, its views expanding as its prospects will be enlarged, it will be enabled to form a just conception of the comparative superiority of things eternal, above those which are confined within the boundaries of time. There, plunging alternately in spirit into the unfathomable abyss, where the wicked dwell amidst everlasting torments, and soaring aloft to the realms of light, where the virtuous enjoy an eternity of happiness, exceeding the utmost stretch of the imagination to conceive, you will be induced to dread the former with unspeakable horror, and to desire the latter with the most vehement ardour. And finally, there contemplating the boundless mercy of the eternal Father, the redeeming love of his incarnate Son, and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, all combining to enable you to avoid the miseries of the one, and to attain the blessings of the other, you will be penetrated with the deepest sense of gratitude for such a wonderful display of unmerited beneficence ; you will reflect with bitterest anguish on the unworthy returns by which it has been requited ; and amidst the warmest effusions of adoration, thanksgiving and love, you will renew to your Omnipotent, yet greatly injured, sovereign and benefactor, your solemn protestations of inviolable fidelity. In this manner, my friends, will the divine physician of your souls, if, like the Jewish multitude, you repair to him in retirement, cause to be formed within you, by the operation of his grace, that happy temper of mind which

will fit you for the remedies he is at all times disposed to impart to you, for the cure of your distempers.

When Jesus had spoken to the assembled multitude of the kingdom of God, and healed those among them who had need of healing, he had recourse to the miracle related in the Gospel, to appease the hunger, which their attendance on him in the wilderness had occasioned them to experience. Nor will the cravings of your spiritual appetites, my friends, be less the objects of his benevolent attention. He will satisfy those cravings which, in your retreat with him, the pure atmosphere of holy solitude, gently agitated by the breath of heaven, will have happily excited. Yes, he will satisfy those cravings. He will satisfy them with a food the most wholesome and delicious,—with a food which, whilst it will give energy to your souls, will replenish them at the same time with the most exquisite delight. That food is the divine influence of his Holy Spirit, which he will communicate to you, and which imparting to you nourishment and strength, will cause you to grow and to increase in virtue, till you attain at length, in the language of the Apostle, “the perfect stature of the fulness of Christ.” It will enliven your faith, animate your hope, and kindle in you the flames of the most ardent charity. Invigorated by this supernatural sustenance, you will walk without lassitude in the way of God’s commandments, surmount the obstacles you may meet with

in your journey, bear stoutly the burthens which it may be your lot to carry, and beat down courageously the enemies of your salvation, who may attempt at once to rob you of your treasures and to deprive you of life. You will also feel its beneficial effects amidst all the troubles of your earthly pilgrimage, in that patience, resignation, and conformity to the will of God, which it will not fail to establish in your souls. And that inward peace, that calm serenity, that habitual cheerfulness, that sunshine of the breast, which you will have the blessing to enjoy, will afford you a pure and heartfelt satisfaction, superior far to the most vivid pleasures derived by wordlings from the gratification of sense. Then will you perceive, then will you be fully and experimentally convinced, that to be virtuous is to be happy; that to serve God with fidelity, is to consult in reality your present comfort; that the observance of his law is its own reward; and that by labouring to secure your everlasting welfare, you contribute most effectually to the promotion of the interests of this your transient state of existence.

But there is one particular species of food with which the holy Jesus nourishes the hungry souls of his followers, which, by its intrinsic excellence, its nutritious qualities, and the magnitude of the effects which it is calculated to produce, rises pre-eminently above every other; and that too, like the loaves and fishes mentioned in the Gospel,



is a miraculous food. Nor is the number of persons to whom he is prepared to impart it, confined, as it was in the wilderness, to five thousand, nor to fifty times five thousand ; but he offers it to as many, as, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, may be disposed to avail themselves of it. And what is that ? Why, my friends, it is himself. “ I,” said he, “ am the true bread that came down from heaven.” It is his own precious body and blood, with which, in the adorable sacrament of the altar, he has graciously provided you. “ For my flesh,” he added, “ is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.” By a frequent and worthy participation of this divine food, you will attain, as far as is consistent with the weakness of your nature, the highest degree of Christian perfection. For it will form between you and that complete model of every virtue, which he has himself inculcated, an union the most intimate. “ He,” said he, “ that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him.” It will cause you, moreover, to be invariably actuated by his Holy Spirit. Of this he has given us, in the following declaration, the most positive assurance. “ As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me.” Thus will it qualify you, by its supernatural efficacy, for the future possession of that blissful immortality promised to those who are partakers of it. “ He that eateth this bread, shall live for ever.”

## SERMON XV.

## PASSION SUNDAY.

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 ON A LIVELY FAITH.
 

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GOSPEL. *St. John*, viii. v. 46-59. At that time Jesus said to the multitudes of the Jews, Which of you shall convince me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe me? He that is of God, heareth the words of God, therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God. The Jews therefore answered and said to him, Do not we say that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor my Father, and you have dishonored me. But I speak not my own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Amen, amen, I say to you, If any man keep my word, he shall not see death for ever. The Jews therefore said, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets, and thou sayest, If any man keep my word, he shall not taste death for ever. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? and the prophets are dead. Whom dost thou make thyself? Jesus answered, If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father that glorifieth me, of whom you say that he is your God. And you have not known him, but I know him. And if I shall say that I know him not, I shall be like to you, a liar. But I do know him, and do keep his word. Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see my day, he saw it and was glad. The Jews therefore said to him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am. They took up stones therefore to cast at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.

THE Gospel of this Sunday is part of a discourse delivered by our blessed Saviour in the treasury of the temple, on the day following that which

closed the feast of tabernacles. He had previously asserted, and that too repeatedly, the truth of his divine mission, which he had clearly manifested by the splendour of his miracles. But as his enemies still persisted in calling it in question, on the ground that that supernatural power, which they could not, without rejecting the testimony of their senses, deny him to have exercised, was to be ascribed entirely to the influence of the devil,—he appealed, for the refutation of that impious charge, to the uniform tenor of his unblemished life, and challenged them to shew, that any part of his moral conduct indicated, in him, the slightest appearance of any connection with the principle of evil. “Which of you,” said he, “shall convince me of sin?” Confident, from the consciousness of his undeviating rectitude, of their utter inability to answer his defiance, and considering their silence as an implied avowal of the truth of his doctrine, he then called upon them to assign a reason for their obstinate incredulity. “If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe me?” Without waiting, however, for a reply, he boldly stated to them the real cause of their behaviour in this respect. For he told them plainly, that it was not to any defect of evidence on his part, but to a want of proper dispositions in themselves, that their infidelity was to be attributed. “He that is of God, heareth the words of God, therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God.” Irritated by this severe, but just reproach, his



enemies, in the conviction of their incapacity to reply to it, vented their indignation against him, as angry disputants usually do when defeated in argument, in bitter terms of scurrility and abuse. "The Jews therefore answered and said to him, Do we not say well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" But mark the calm and dignified answer returned by Jesus to this ebullition of impotent passion. Having disavowed, explicitly, all intercourse with the prince of darkness, he adduced his well-known piety to God, whom he did not hesitate to call his Father, as a decisive proof of his opposition to that irreconcilable enemy, both of God and man; and thus made it to appear, that *they*, and not *he*, had acted in reality like agents of Satan, by the dishonor which they had endeavoured to cast upon *him*. "Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor my father, and you have dishonored me." Lest, however, it might be suspected that the rebuke which he had just uttered, was the effect of resentment, proceeding from the feelings of wounded honor, he assured them that the vindication of his personal character was not to him an object of concern, that he abandoned that in perfect security to the care of his heavenly Father, who, he well knew, would not neglect it, but would revenge the insults which might be offered to it with merited severity. "But I," said he, "seek not my own glory, there is one that seeketh and judgeth." No. The object, he observed, which he had in view, was not

the establishment of his own fame, but the advancement of the everlasting interests of man, which he indefatigably laboured to promote, by exhorting them to comply with his divine instructions. "Amen, amen, I say to you, if any man keep my word, he shall not see death for ever." This promise of a blissful immortality beyond the grave, which Jesus held forth to his faithful disciples, the Jews, yielding to the erroneous suggestions of their carnal conceptions, construed into an assurance of an eternal duration of existence upon earth; and hence they persuaded themselves, that they were now furnished from his own mouth with an incontrovertible proof of his being an impostor, since he pretended to confer a privilege on his obedient followers, which not even Abraham, the revered father of their race, nor any among their greatest prophets, was permitted to enjoy. "The Jews therefore said: Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets, and thou sayest, if any man keep my word, he shall not taste death for ever." This, they added, was a degree of presumption not to be endured. What? The carpenter's son, the low-born offspring of Mary and Joseph, the man of Nazareth, out of which, proverbially, no good cometh, arrogate to himself a superiority above the most renowned and exalted personages, whose names alone are the brightest ornaments of the national annals! What intolerable pride and audacity is this? To what pitch of elevation would this ex-

travagant boaster carry his pretensions? “ Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom dost thou make thyself?” To this violent eruption of Jewish rage, Jesus meekly replied, that were the lofty pretensions which he assumed, founded only on his own assertion, they would not be entitled to any regard; but, that supported and confirmed, as they evidently were, by the unexceptionable testimony of his heavenly Father, whom they themselves acknowledged to be their God, they could not, with consistency, refuse to admit them. “ Jesus answered, if I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father that glorifieth me, of whom you say, that he is your God.” But, although, he continued, they confessed him to be their God, yet to them, he maintained that he was an unknown God. For if that were not the case, they would surely, he observed, have recognized the features of his divinity in the transcendent perfections which distinguished his Son; in whom, however, with an absurdity surpassed only by their impiety, they pretended to discover the lineaments of Satan, in the infernal influences to which they imputed his actions. That with respect to himself, he knew him, he said, well. That not only did he profess to know him, but that he proved, moreover, the truth of his professions, by the best of all possible arguments, a practical observance of his divine commands, which is the necessary consequence of the knowlege of a Being,



whom to know is to love, and whom to love is to obey. "And you have not known him, but I know him. And if I should say that I know him not, I should be like to you, a liar. But I know him, and keep his word." As to Abraham, whose character they were so anxious to defend against every claim to superior excellence, he assured them that that great and venerable patriarch did not participate in the sentiments which they had manifested. That he wished, on the contrary, most ardently to behold that promised descendant from his loins, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. That he actually did behold him, and that he hailed him with transports of heartfelt exultation. "Abraham, your father, rejoiced that he might see my day : he saw it, and was glad." This distant and joyful prospect of the future Messiah, with which Abraham was gratified, through the medium of faith, to which our blessed Saviour here alluded, the Jews construed into an affirmation of his own earthly existence in the time of that great man. And being unable to comprehend how a person, whose age had not yet, as they observed, reached half a century, should have been contemporary with him who had died many centuries before, they might well exclaim, as we read they did : "The Jews then said to him : Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" Dignified as had been thus far the language of our blessed Saviour, throughout the whole of the conference which he

held with the Jews on the present occasion, it now rose to a degree of sublimity beyond which it is not possible for human language to soar. For not only did he declare himself to have existed during the life, and even before the birth of the patriarch Abraham,—but assuming that characteristic attribute of Divinity, expressed by the verb *I am*, “I am who am,” by which the great Jehovah commissioned Moses to designate *him* by whom he was sent to the children of Israel,—he unequivocally claimed to himself the nature of the Godhead. “Jesus said to them: Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” Exasperated beyond measure at so confident an assumption of the nature of the Divinity, the Jews were preparing to stone him as a blasphemer, when, by an exertion of his divine power, he rendered himself invisible, and effected his retreat. “Then they took up stones to cast at him, but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.”

When we seriously consider the stupendous prodigies performed by our blessed Saviour in the midst of the Jewish people, all bearing such evident testimony to the divinity of his mission, when we contemplate in him the complete accomplishment of the predictions of preceding prophets, who, through a long succession of ages, had previously announced to them his arrival, and delineated his character, when we reflect on the sublimity and sanctity of his doctrine, and on the unblemished manners which distinguished his life,

we are filled with astonishment at their obstinate incredulity,—we are at a loss to reconcile it with the wonders they beheld, and are naturally led to enquire into the cause of such unconquerable stubbornness of mind. But in the Gospel of this Sunday, the whole difficulty is removed, the enigma is completely unfolded. The cause of this their invincible obstinacy is here distinctly stated. It is pronounced to be the profound corruption of their hearts, which, by diffusing a thick mist over their understandings, rendered them inaccessible to the light of truth. They were not of God, therefore did they not hear the words of God. “He that is of God,” said our blessed Saviour to them, “heareth the words of God, therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God.” They were not of God: that is to say, they were not animated by God’s holy spirit; their dispositions were not conformable to his divine will; they were led by the blind impulse of their prejudices, and occupied in the gratification of their passions. Is it surprising then, that under the influence of such dispositions, they should have been averse to the reception of those doctrines, which would have counteracted all their inveterate prepossessions, and laid so powerful a restraint on the indulgence of their sensual appetites? How can this be surprising, when the effects of these dispositions are declared by Christ himself, to be of such a nature, as not only to create an antipathy, but to oppose, whilst they remain, an invincible obstacle to the



discovery of eternal truth. “Why do you not know my speech?”—(they are his own words addressed to the Jews.)—“Why do you not know my speech? Because you *cannot* hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do.” Here then, my friends, the Jewish obstinacy ceases to be to us an object of wonder. But that persons who sincerely believe the important doctrines of the Son of God to be true; that they, that Christians, should in their lives, exhibit such a contradiction to this belief, is a problem, it must be allowed, more difficult of solution. What? Believe the whole system of Christianity to be true, and act as if it were a fable? Be firmly convinced of the reality of objects on which the highest interests of man are involved, which are of a nature to awaken his liveliest sensibilities, to call forth all the ardor of his zeal, and still to remain indifferent? Be Christians in theory, in practice infidels? Impossible. For I can never persuade myself, that indifference in conduct, can ever be reconciled with a firm and sincere conviction of the momentous truths of salvation. That it can not, it shall be my endeavour to shew in the sequel of this instruction.

Nothing is more common than to hear men applauded for the firmness of their faith, whose conduct is a disgrace to the tenets of their belief. Their lives, we are informed, it is true, are not quite so regular as they might be. They have indeed their failings we are told, (and who indeed

has not his failings!) In the practice of their religious duties, they may not perhaps, it is added, be altogether so scrupulously exact, as were devoutly to be wished; but then, at the same time, they are strong, it is said, in faith. They could not, it is observed, be prevailed upon by any consideration whatsoever, to depart from that, and they are prepared, if necessary, to spill the last drop of their blood in its defence. This, my friends, I do not hesitate to pronounce to be at once a most pernicious and erroneous notion. It is in the first place, I say, a most pernicious notion, because it furnishes the adversaries of religion with a favorable pretext for depreciating and ridiculing the gift of faith, when they find it, and that too in an eminent degree, attributed to persons, who, in the general tenor of their behaviour, do not discover the slightest appearance of it. I also maintain it to be a most erroneous notion. For to imagine the faith of which the Gospel speaks, to be compatible with loose morality and a general neglect of the duties of religion, argues the grossest ignorance of its very nature. Listen to the Apostle St. James on this subject: "But some one will say, thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without works, and I will shew thee my faith by works." What consequence are we hence to deduce unless it be this, that the true criterion of faith are works? That genuine faith, the faith which justifies, and which alone can conduct to eternal life, is active and

fruitful; very different from that inert, that barren, that lifeless species of faith, which, though it be sufficient to prevent an exclusion from the assembly of the faithful, is by no means qualified to procure admittance into the glorious society of the just made perfect. Yes, my friends, the faith of which the Gospel speaks, the only faith available to salvation, is active and fruitful. And to the want of it, are to be ascribed not only the scandalous excesses and flagrant enormities of profligate and abandoned sinners, but also that little zeal in the cause of religion, that spiritless indifference, that lethargic tepidity, so prevalent among Christians of a different description, even among those whose external conduct is generally deemed to be orderly and regular, and who are usually considered by many to be an honor to their profession. For we know from experience, that the exertions of men are ever in proportion to the interest which they take in the objects of their pursuit. Hence, when a brilliant prospect of emolument, of dignity, or renown, is laid open before them, how cheerfully do they engage in the most laborious employments? With what daring intrepidity do they confront the greatest dangers? How manfully do they struggle against every obstacle which may oppose their endeavours? Stimulated by a lust of glory, the warrior rushes on to the field of combat, and plunges into all the hardships and perils of war. No fear can withhold the enterprising adventurer from undertaking a



long and tedious voyage, through all the hazards to which he is exposed from winds, and waves, and rocks, and quicksands, whilst riches invite, and hope presses him forward. No intensity or continuance of application by day and by night, is thought too great, by him who aspires to offices of importance in the state, and who wishes to qualify himself for filling them with honor. Even in the humbler walks of life, do we not see men submit to the most painful and mortifying drudgeries, to acquire at length a decent competency for themselves and families? And can any objects be conceived more valuable and interesting to us, than those discovered through the medium of faith? What are all the riches, the honors, the enjoyments, which present such enchanting allurements to the minds of men, compared with that inestimable, that inconceivable happiness, with which the Almighty in his goodness has promised to reward his faithful servants? Are not all of them unsatisfactory? Does not experience prove them to be so? Did they ever yet give content to their possessors? Do they not moreover pass quickly away, even as a shadow? Besides, my friends, though fleeting and satisfactory, are we even sure when we pursue them, that we shall ever attain possession of them? Is not disappointment as frequent as success? Nugatory, however, deceitful and fugacious as they are, we strive and labor, and are as solicitous to acquire them, as if they were matters of the highest moment; as if

they were to last for ever. Whence comes it then, my friends, that encouraged by hope, fallacious hope, by hope so blended with all the anxiety of fear, and oftentimes in the end, productive of so much bitterness of soul, we are so ardent in the pursuit of worldly vanities;—and that in the great, the important affair of salvation, which faith points out to us as the certain reward of our perseverance in virtue, we are so comparatively tepid and indifferent? Whence comes it, that in the paltry race of worldlings, where a corruptible crown only is held forth to us as the future remuneration of our successful efforts, where so many competitors are to be outstripped, such hardships to be endured, such difficulties to be surmounted, we bear rapidly forward towards the goal; and yet in the honorable race of the children of God, with the cheering prospect of an incorruptible crown before us, from which none are excluded, and which all may obtain,—where the noble emulation of holy rivals, far from discouraging us, inspires us, on the contrary, with additional fortitude, and pains and obstacles vanish from before our zeal,—whence comes it, I say, that in this glorious race of immortality, our course is so easily retarded? Whence, I ask, my friends, but from a want of faith? Whence, but because, in the language of the Apostle, we run not as at a certainty, but as at an uncertainty? Whence those frequent defeats experienced by us in the triumph of passion, but because we fight not the good fight with the steady resolution of

Christian heroes, but with the impotent exertions of "men beating the air"?

Oh! Christians, were you deeply penetrated with the sublime truths of your holy religion; were you feelingly convinced of the reality of that incomprehensible happiness, "which eye hath not seen, which ear hath not heard, and which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive," could you ever allow it to be absent from your minds? Would it not perpetually occupy your thoughts? Would not all the actions of your lives be made subservient to it? Oh! that the children of men would oftentimes look forward from the desert of this world on the holy land of the heavenly Canaan! Oh! that they would stedfastly fix their attention on that divine spectacle of the Jerusalem that is above! How would they become enamoured of the lovely objects they would there behold! Did they, like the inspired psalmist, remember thee; did they listen, like him, to the glorious things that are told of thee, O city of God, how impetuously would their bounding hearts spring towards thee! How ardently would they desire to be enrolled among the number of thy blessed inhabitants! How would all the meaner glories of this world fade away before the transcendant splendour which illumines thee! How dull and insipid would be all the concerts of earthly music, to ears accustomed to the ravishing canticles of the heavenly Sion! Sooner would they forget their right hands, than they would forget thee.



Never would they be at rest, whilst held at a distance from thee. On thee alone, would all their hopes be fixed. In thee, would all their joys be concentrated. Yes, indeed, my friends, such at least, in some degree, may be expected to be the consequences of a lively faith on the heart of a firm believer. But are these the impressions which you experience? Do you feel any thing of this sacred, this seraphic glow, this impatient ardour for the good things of the Lord in the land of the living? Does not the world, with its pomps and vanities, occupy, on the contrary, the chief place in your affections? Is not religion considered by men in general as the stated occupation of particular times and seasons, rather than as a great divine principle, designed to produce within them such dispositions of soul, as may qualify them for the enjoyment of a blissful immortality? And what am I hence to infer? That faith is deficient in efficacy on the hearts of men in general? No; but that men in general are deficient in faith. The conclusion which, in support of the efficacy of faith on the mind of the firm believer, I have drawn from the consideration of the joys of heaven, will be still more striking, if to it be added the frightful alternative of those inexpressible torments endured by the reprobate in the region of woe, which is equally an article of the Christian's belief, but on which time will not at present permit me to expatiate.

It may be observed, however, perhaps, that the

rewards and punishments of a future state of existence, being invisible to the eye, and contemplated only in distant prospect, are not calculated to make a deep impression on the mind of man, and that these circumstances in conjunction with the powerful influence of the passions, are sufficient to account for a violation of the precepts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, consistently with a firm belief of its doctrines. To this observation, space will not suffer me to make any other reply at present, than that which is furnished me by the Apostle Paul, in the wonderful effects of faith on the conduct of the servants of God, recorded by him in his epistle to the Hebrews. Listen to the words of that great Apostle, who, after having established the fundamental principle, that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, and exemplified its efficacy in the lives of the holy patriarchs and prophets as well as of other distinguished worthies, proceeds in the following animated strain: "But others were racked, not accepting deliverance, that they might find a better resurrection. And others had trial of mockeries and stripes, moreover also of bands and prisons; they were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins, in goat-skins, being in want, distressed, afflicted, of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts, in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." How happens it then, my friends, that

stimulated by faith, the servants of God could remain firm and unshaken against such a variety of extraordinary assaults, that they could brave the fury of tyrants and persecutors, and could look unappalled on all the most frightful inventions of ingenious cruelty, on irons, and racks, and tortures, and death, in its most ghastly shapes; and that we, on the contrary, in the ordinary trials which fall more or less to the lot of every one, are so easily overcome? Ought not the same cause to produce in us the same effects which it did on them? Were not the objects held forth by faith, as distant and invisible then, as they are now? Was not human nature the same formerly as it is at present, open to the seductions of worldly allurements, and prompted by the passions to sensual gratifications? Whence then the difference of effect? Oh! my friends, did the same cause exist, it would produce, most assuredly, the same effects. Had we the faith of the servants of God, it would manifest itself in our conduct, as it did in theirs. And if it do not, if it do not manifest itself in our conduct, as it did in theirs, to what are we to attribute it, but to the weakness in us of that divine principle which in them was the main spring of such heroic achievements?

Exert then, my friends, henceforth, exert, I entreat you, your most strenuous efforts to acquire that deep and feeling conviction of the unseen goods and evils of eternity, the importance of which it has been this day my endeavour to im-



press upon your minds. Meditate with attention on that twofold declaration so solemnly pronounced by Christ himself, "that the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting." Revolve and weigh it habitually in your minds, till it shall have obtained in them that predominant ascendancy which its transcendent importance imperiously demands. But be sure, at the same time, that you do not forget to unite to your meditations your most fervent petitions to that Almighty Being who has the minds and hearts of men at his disposal, soliciting him in the name, and for the sake, of his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased, and who is your great High Priest, mediator and advocate, to implant, mature, and perfect, within you, that prolific germ of universal holiness, a strong, lively, and energetic faith. Thus animated on the one hand, under its divine influence, with the prospect of a glorious immortality,—and contemplating on the other, that inexpressible wretchedness endured by the reprobate in the regions of woe, you will pursue steadily your undeviating course in the path of righteousness, till you reach, at length, that blissful abode, to which your views and affections will have been constantly directed.

## SERMON XVI.

### PALM SUNDAY.

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#### ON COMMUNIONS.

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GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, xxi. v. 1-9. At that time, when Jesus drew nigh to Jerusalem, and was come to Bethphage, unto Mount Olivet, he sent two disciples, saying to them, Go ye into the village that is over against you, and immediately you shall find an ass tied and a colt with her; loose them and bring them to me. And if any man shall say any thing to you, say ye, that the Lord hath need of them; and forthwith he will let them go. Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of her that is used to the yoke. And the disciples going, did as Jesus commanded them; and they brought the ass and the colt, and laid their garments upon them, and made him sit thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; and others cut boughs from the trees, and strewed them in the way; and the multitudes that went before and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

THE spectacle exhibited in the Gospel of this Sunday, is not, it must be confessed, by any means conformable to the notions usually entertained by men of worldly grandeur. The reputed son of a mechanic of Nazareth, mounted on an ass's foal, accompanied by its dam, and thus mounted, proceeding to Jerusalem amidst the acclamations of a promiscuous multitude, proclaiming him a de-

scendant from the royal stock of their legitimate monarchs, and as such, shewing him the most significant marks of their veneration and attachment, presents us with a scene little calculated to excite the admiration of the incredulous and profane. To them it must have more the appearance of a lawless mob, wishing to raise a favorite of their own order to the government of the realm, than of any thing else. "And they (the disciples) brought," says the Gospel, "the ass and the colt, and laid their garments thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way. And the multitude that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest." But if the whole of this extraordinary transaction be viewed, as it should be, through the perspective of faith, it will be found to wear a very different aspect. For that reputed son of the mechanic of Nazareth, will then be seen, not only to be in reality, as he was hailed by the multitude, the royal son of David, but the incarnate Son of the Most High God. The people who, by their acclamations, recognized him for their king, and who were eager to pay him the respect due to his royal dignity, will be perceived to have been instruments in the hand of the Almighty to bear testimony to the character with which he was invested, though their ideas of his kingdom, which was not of this world, were erroneous and worldly. And even the animal on which he rode,



mean, vulgar, and contemptible as it may appear, will be discovered, when viewed with the eyes of faith, to have performed an important office in this extraordinary procession, in the testimony which it bore, by its presence, to the divine foreknowledge of the august personage whom it carried, who, by the mere dint of human sagacity, could never have known that it would be found in the place pointed out by him to his disciples, and still less that it would be immediately surrendered to them by its owner, when demanded. Yet these particulars are explicitly related by the Evangelist, when he says, “And when they drew nigh to Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto Mount Olivet, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them : Go ye into the village that is over against you, and immediately you shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her, loose them, and bring them to me. And if any man shall say any thing to you, say ye that the Lord hath need of them : and forthwith he will let them go. And the Apostles going, did as Jesus commanded them, and they brought the ass and the colt.” Besides bearing testimony to the divine foreknowledge of the illustrious personage whom it carried, this same usually reputed ignoble animal, may be thought, perhaps, to have been itself individually ennobled, by the prediction of an inspired herald, who, four hundred years before, had announced its appearance, as well as the particular office it was destined to perform on the present occasion. “Now all this was

done," says the sacred text, "that the word might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying : Tell ye the daughter of Zion, behold thy king cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of her that is used to the yoke." But that the real grandeur of this memorable procession of our blessed Saviour to the city of Jerusalem, may appear in a still more striking point of view, let it be compared with the ceremony of a Roman triumph, which was the most splendid and honorable mark of distinction with which Rome rewarded her victorious chieftains. There is a particular description given by Plutarch of one of those triumphs, in that of the celebrated Paulus Æmilius, after his conquest of Macedon. Let this remarkable triumph, with all its circumstances of splendour and magnificence, be compared with that of Christ, in his advance to Jerusalem ; and I will venture to say, that it will be found to be infinitely inferior to it. Æmilius, it is true, is described by his Theban biographer, as exalted on high, in a magnificent chariot, and clad in a purple robe, interwoven with gold ; whilst Christ is represented, by the inspired Evangelist, as seated on an animal usually held in little estimation, without any thing particular in his external apparel. Yet the virtues which embellished the person of the humble Jesus, were far more honorable badges of distinction than the gorgeous trappings of the Roman hero. And the mean equipage of the former, for reasons which

have already been assigned, surpassed, beyond comparison, in real majesty, the pompous car of state in which the latter was conveyed. The triumph of Æmilius was graced with the spoils of the vanquished enemy, followed by a succession of royal captives, exemplifying, in their persons, the transitoriness and instability of worldly greatness. That of Jesus was decorated with the trophies of his victories over the powers of darkness, which were to be recognized in the persons of those from whom he had cast out devils, who assuredly would not fail to attend him on an occasion like the present; and who, by the testimonies which they bore to his past exploits, might be regarded as preludes to that more signal overthrow of the infernal tyrant, which he achieved by his death,—and for which he was honored with a still more distinguished triumph by his resurrection from the tomb; when, in the language of the Apostle, “spoiling the principalities and powers, he made a shew of them, confidently triumphing openly over them in himself.” (Coloss. c. ii. v. 15.) The ostentatious march of the conqueror of Macedon to the Roman capital, was celebrated with songs of praise, chaunted by the voices of his victorious followers. The humble approach of the conqueror of hell to the Jewish metropolis, had been proclaimed by the voice of Heaven itself, in the inspired strain of the prophet, when he exclaimed: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy king



cometh to thee, the just and Saviour." In the one, oxen crowned with garlands, and destined to be immolated, with unavailing pomp, to an imaginary divinity, were led by youths girded with belts of curious workmanship. In the other, a victim of infinite value, even Jesus himself, prepared to be offered to the living God, as an atonement for the sins of a guilty world, advanced spontaneously towards the altar of sacrifice, about to be crimsoned with his precious blood. Who does not perceive how prodigiously the former of these triumphal processions was, in real dignity, interest and worth, exceeded by the latter. Yes, if the triumph of *Æmilius* was that of a hero, the triumph of Jesus was that of a God.

The entrance of our blessed Saviour into Jerusalem, which terminated the procession recorded in the Gospel, may be considered as an emblem of that which he is prepared to make into the souls of his faithful followers, at the approaching solemnity. And the words in which the prophet announced to the children of Israel the first of these events, the ministers of the Gospel may, with propriety, apply to the second:—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion, shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy king cometh to thee, the just and Saviour." Yes, Christian souls, ye highly favored daughters of the heavenly Sion, daughters elect of the "Jerusalem that is above," for so you may be justly called, "being regenerated," as, in the language of St. Peter, you

are, "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that cannot fade, reserved in heaven for you." (1 PET. *c. i. v. 3, 4.*) Yes, then, I say, Christian souls, rejoice and exult. For behold your king cometh to you, the just and Saviour. Yes, he comes to you in a form not less characteristic of his condescension and meekness, than was the lowliness of demeanour which marked his entrance into Jerusalem, as described by the Evangelist. He comes divested of the splendour of his divinity, that he may accommodate himself to the weakness of your humanity. He comes, in short, veiled with the sacramental semblance of ordinary food, as expressive of his gracious and affectionate design of nourishing your souls unto everlasting life. Yet let not that homely and familiar guise, which, on your account, he has condescended to assume, prevent you from recognizing his august presence. For you are explicitly assured, by himself in person, that beneath that homely and familiar guise, he is actually present; and if you listen attentively with the ears of faith, you will hear distinctly the accents of his voice, addressing you in terms, which he is stated by St. John, to have formerly used to the Jews at Capharnaum: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven, if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." (JOHN, *c. vi. v. 51, 52.*) Not only does he advance towards you in a form at once the most humble and inviting, but as before expounded in his entrance into Jeru-

saalem, he also comes laden with the rich spoils of the vanquished enemy. The spoils to which I allude are your transgressions cancelled, on your repentance, by the application to your souls of the infinite merits of his death upon the cross. He comes amidst hosannas of angelic spirits, who, though invisible to the human eye, may be rendered visible to the eye of faith. And finally, he comes furnishing you with an offering acceptable beyond every other to the majesty of heaven, and qualified by its influence to draw down upon you its choicest blessings.

What excessive condescension, my friends, is this on the part of the eternal Son of the Most High! And what conceivable object could he have in view in consenting to submit to it? If, in the mystery of his incarnation, "he debased himself taking the form of a servant," we also discover, in the magnitude of the effect, which was nothing less than a satisfactory atonement to divine justice for the sins of mankind, a corresponding purpose. But what could induce him to assume the form in which he presents himself to us in the sacrament of the altar? What could induce him to become our food, to nourish us with the substance of his own flesh, to incorporate himself with us, and thus to become, in a manner, consubstantial with us? Oh! my friends, this indeed must be acknowledged to be a most stupendous act of condescension on the part of the Son of God. Stupendous, however, as it is, and entirely



unmerited on our part, I do not hesitate to say that it is well warranted by the importance of the object proposed to be attained. And what is that? Why, my friends, it is nothing less than the elevation of human nature to a participation of the divine,—to a participation, that is to say, of a nature endowed with such godlike capacities, dispositions and inclinations, as are requisite to qualify it for the enjoyment of those pure and sublime delights which constitute the happiness of the blessed in God's heavenly kingdom.

Now, although, in the present childhood of our existence, that perfection of the divine nature is not to be expected, which corresponds with the enjoyment of things, “which eye hath not seen, which ear hath not heard, and which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive,” yet the elementary principles and rudiments of it, if I may so say, together with the means of their progressive developement, and ultimate maturity, are to be acquired in the school of Jesus Christ. “When I was a child,” says the Apostle, “I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away the things of a child. We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known.” (1 Cor. *c.* xiii. *v.* 11, 12.) And where can that Divine Master be thought to teach his disciples so effectually, where can he be imagined to make them feel so forcibly the influence of his

doctrines, or to form within them that heavenly frame of mind which is requisite to qualify them “to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light,” (COLOSS. c. i. v. 12.) as in the sacrament of the altar? Yes, my friends, there it is, it is in that incomprehensible mystery of boundless love, that he speaks to the souls of his faithful disciples with the most powerful effect. There intimately united with them, he infuses into their breasts the same sentiments which animate his own. There he causes them to seek, like himself, the accomplishment of the will of his Father who is in heaven. There he graciously communicates to them that peace which surpasseth all understanding, and that joy in the Holy Spirit which no words can express. There he impresses them with a feeling conviction of the incomparable superiority of the delights of religion above those which are sought in worldly enjoyments. There he secretly disengages their affections from inordinate attachments to the things of earth, and stimulates them to press forward with the most ardent zeal for the prize which awaits them at the close of their career. There, in short, he so purifies, refines, spiritualizes, and exalts the faculties of their minds, and the affections of their hearts, as to enable them, on the removal of the bands of their mortality, to expand themselves by contemplation and love, to the fruition of those pure and incomprehensible delights enjoyed by the spirits of the just made perfect in God’s everlasting kingdom.

Such, my friends, are the happy results which may be expected by you from the entrance of your blessed Saviour into your souls in the sacrament of the altar, at the approaching solemnity, provided you give him a suitable reception. But in order to give him a reception of this description, you must imitate the example of the Jewish multitude recorded in the Gospel, who, spreading their garments in the way, and cutting down boughs from the trees, and strewing them in the way, escorted him in triumph to the city of Jerusalem, with hosannas of joy. Do you, then, my friends, in like manner divest yourselves of all your evil habits. Cut down the boughs of that wild olive of inordinate self-love, which are your irregular appetites, and disorderly passions. Lay them down at the feet of Jesus, that they may be trampled upon by him, when he enters into your souls, whilst, like true and faithful followers, you walk in his train, by an imitation of his virtues, and present him with the tributes of your pious hearts in the warmest expressions of adoration, thanksgiving, and love. Animated by a strong and lively faith, acknowledge him, not only as the Jews did, to be the son of David, and promised Messiah, but adore him moreover, with the most profound prostration of soul, as the only begotten son of the Eternal Father, exclaiming with exultation, at least inwardly in your hearts, Hosanna to the Son of David, hosanna to the Son of God. Pass in review the numerous instances of infinite condescension,



goodness, and mercy, which he has manifested in your regard. Contemplate that state of extreme humiliation, to which, on your account, he consented to be reduced, when, as the Apostle expresses it, "being in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal to God, he debased himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in fashion found as a man." (PHIL. c. 2. v. 6. 7.) Reflect on the excruciating torments, on all the anguish both of soul and body, which he endured in the accomplishment of the work of your redemption. Think on the galling and ignominious servitude from which he has liberated you, and the abyss of woe, from which he has snatched you by that astonishing achievement. Consider the dignity to which he has raised you, and the happiness to which he has authorised you to aspire. And let the consideration of such unspeakable blessings, added to that which he confers upon you in deigning to become your food for the nourishment of your souls unto everlasting life, prompt you to express your deep sense of his transcendent goodness, in the glowing terms with which he was greeted by the Jews on his approach to Jerusalem, "blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Finally, let the exalted and glorious inhabitants of the highest heavens, be invited to unite their voices with yours, in sounding forth the praises of your common Lord. "Hosanna in the highest."

Remember, however, my friends, that the same

people, who were so loud in their applause of our blessed Saviour in his way to the holy city, were, five days after, as clamorous for his blood : that their hosannas of jubilation were exchanged for imprecations of vengeance : and that he whom they conducted in triumph, as their honored sovereign, to the metropolis of his realm, was led out by them as the vilest of malefactors to the place of execution, there to expire in excruciating torments on a disgraceful cross. Let the feelings of horror, with which the contemplation of so shocking an instance of barbarous inconstancy must, undoubtedly, inspire you, deter you from relapsing into your former transgressions, by which, to use the language of the Apostle, “you crucify again to yourselves the Son of God, and make a mockery of him.” (HEB. c. vi. v. 6.) Nor let the august ceremony of the reception of the Lord of glory into your souls, be exclusively confined to the present season. Let it not be the mere annual discharge of an indispensable obligation. Let it not be the ignoble effect of servile fear, produced by the threat of ecclesiastical censures. Do not wait to be terrified and driven. Do not wait, till the Church of God, clad in its terrors, and rolling over your heads its spiritual thunders, menace you with exclusion from the society of the faithful. Go forth spontaneously, cheerfully, frequently. Receive him joyfully into your hearts. Entreat him earnestly to subdue within you every low and degrading propensity of your corrupt nature, to

withdraw your affections from inordinate attachment to earthly vanities, and to establish within you that heavenly temper of mind, which will cause you to delight in such contemplations as are destined to be hereafter your eternal reward. Your petitions, you may be assured, will not be presented to him in vain. And having made you, by the operations of his renovating grace, partakers of his divine nature, he will conduct you with him in triumph into the heavenly Jerusalem, where you will reign with him for ever in boundless felicity.



## SERMON XVII.

### EASTER SUNDAY.

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#### ON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

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GOSPEL. *St. Mark*, xvi. v. 1-7. At that time, Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Salome, brought sweet spices, that coming they might anoint Jesus. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they come to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen; and they said one to another, Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And looking, they saw the stone rolled back; for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe, and they were astonished; who saith to them, Be not affrighted; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen, he is not here, behold the place where they laid him; but go, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee, there you shall see him, as he told you.

THE Gospel of this Sunday contains a plain, yet interesting account, of a visit paid by certain pious women to the tomb of Jesus. But what was the object of this visit? Why, to a person who should reflect on the repeated predictions delivered by our blessed Saviour respecting his resurrection, it would naturally occur, that, apparently, it could have been no other than that of witnessing with their own eyes so glorious an event. But that no expectation of such event occupied their minds on the present occasion, is intimated by the Evangelist, who states explicitly their design to have

been to pay their last respects to the lifeless remains of their beloved master, by embalming them with spices, which they had purchased for the purpose, at the close of the sabbath. "And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary (the mother) of James and Salome, brought sweet spices, that coming they might anoint Jesus." With this view, therefore, and with these materials for the accomplishment of their pious project, they set out from Jerusalem in the morning of the third day after his crucifixion, and arrived soon after sun-rise at the place of their destination. "And very early in the morning," continues the sacred text, "the first day of the week, they come to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen." That they did not entertain the smallest suspicion of the resurrection of their divine master, at this period, may be fairly collected from the anxiety which they expressed in their conference with each other, concerning the removal of the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre. "And they said one to another, who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" And even when they saw that obstacle removed, it does not in any manner appear, from the account of the Gospel, that that circumstance made any remarkable impression upon their minds; since nothing more is related on the subject than, that "looking, they saw the stone rolled back, for it was very great." Nor does it in short notice any extraordinary emotion experienced by them, until their entrance into the

sepulchre. Then, indeed, it is true, it does describe to us their utter astonishment at the wonderful spectacle which presented itself to their view; when, instead of the dead body of their crucified master which they expected to find, they beheld the living form of a human being, clothed in a white garment. “And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe, and they were astonished.” But if the *appearance* alone of this young man excited their astonishment, what must have been their feelings, when they heard him address them in soothing accents of encouragement, and that too in terms which clearly indicated his acquaintance with the object of their visit? “And he saith to them, Be not affrighted; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.” What, when he told them that their search for him within the sepulchral monument was to no purpose, for that he was now no longer to be numbered among the dead? “He is risen, he is not here.” What, when he directed their attention to the vacant spot that had been occupied by the body, which had now disappeared? “Behold the place where they laid him.” What, when he communicated to them the joyful intelligence, and commissioned them to impart the same to the disciples, and to Peter in particular; that, in conformity to the promise which their master had made to them before his death, they should behold him again in Gallilee alive? “But go tell his dis-



ciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Gallilee, there you shall see him as he told you." What, I ask you, must have been the feelings of these devout women, under all the circumstances which I have thus detailed? And to bring the subject home to your own bosoms, what, my friends, should be your feelings, to whom the reality of that great and glorious event, of the triumphant resurrection of Jesus from the tomb, which was announced by the angel to the holy women, is fully substantiated? I will now therefore proceed to lay before you the evidence of that stupendous event, and then communicate to you such reflexions as it obviously suggests.

Having expounded to you the text of the Gospel, permit me now, in imitation of the holy women, to invite you to accompany me to the tomb of Jesus. Yes, with hearts replenished with the aromatic perfumes of the devout affections, let us repair in spirit to the tomb of Jesus; not indeed to anoint, as they wished, his lifeless remains, but to embalm in our minds, and thus to render imperishable, the grateful recollection of all that he has done, and all that he has suffered, in our behalf. Let us hasten into the interior of the monument, where the precious body of our divine Master was deposited; let us fix our eyes stedfastly on the hallowed spot from which it has now disappeared, and then, having weighed with calm and dispassionate reflexion, the convincing evidence of the stupendous event by which its disap-

pearance is accounted for in the Gospel, let us listen with docility to the suggestions of faith.

In reality, my friends, if there be one fact in history, which is better entitled to credit than any other, I do not hesitate to say, that that fact is the glorious resurrection of Jesus from the tomb. Never, no never, within the memory of man, was any transaction transmitted through every successive generation, from the period of its occurrence to the present day, amidst such a blaze of evidence. It is attested by the positive and unexceptionable testimony of persons of unimpeachable integrity, who were themselves eye-witnesses of it; who saw Jesus dead, and who afterwards beheld him alive; who beheld him not once, or twice only, but frequently; not transiently, but for a considerable time; who not only beheld him, but who heard him, conversed with him, touched him, eat and drank with him, and had every imaginable certainty, in short, both of the reality and identity of his person, which it was possible for the evidence of the senses to convey; and who proved, moreover, their honesty and sincerity, by that best of arguments, the effusion of their blood. To the positive deposition of the friends of Jesus, we have also to add the negative testimony of his irreconcilable enemies, who never attempted to disprove the important fact. If Jesus was not actually risen, as his apostles openly declared that he was, why did not these enemies produce the body, and thus quash at once such groundless pre-

tensions ? Why have recourse to the pitiful subterfuge of the sleeping guards, and of the apostles coming by night and stealing the body away, if they had any solid and substantial means of refuting the testimony of the witnesses of the resurrection ?

But the truth, it may be said, of the evangelical narrative, is not to be depended upon, since the marvellous account which it gives of the resurrection of Jesus, and of the circumstances connected with it, may be all a fable from the beginning to the end. If so, then there is an end at once of all credit due to history. For certain it is, that never did any history exist, bearing such strong and indubitable marks of authenticity, as that of the four Gospels. Waving, however, for the present, the discussion of that point, I even contend, that if neither the four Gospels, nor any other part of the New Testament, which refers, in almost every page, to the event of the resurrection, had ever been published, or, if having been published, they were now lost, yet this fundamental article of the Christian belief would still remain unshaken. For we know, from the authority of every author who has ever written on the subject of Christianity, friend or enemy, sacred or profane, from its first introduction to the present day, that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, was ever considered as the grand basis on which it was established ; and that it was ever announced as such by the apostles, who were its first propagators, and who pre-



tended at least to ocular demonstration of it. The question therefore now is, whether having been so announced, and so considered, as it is incontrovertibly demonstrated to have been, it evidently follows, that the resurrection must actually have taken place? I maintain that it does. For in the first place, the apostles, who published it as an event of which themselves were witnesses, could not possibly have been deceived, as I have already shewn: and in the next place, I contend, that their characters, together with the whole of their conduct, raise them above the reach of suspicion of wishing to practice deceit upon others. For is it credible, I ask, that persons, so uniformly virtuous in every other respect, should in this single instance, be so excessively wicked? Is it credible, that men, so notorious on every other occasion for their simplicity and candour, should, in an affair of such importance, be the fabricators of fraud? Is it to be believed, that not only they could have invented so impious an imposture, but that they would have given up every earthly advantage and comfort,—that they would have exposed themselves without hesitation to all sorts of contumelies, vexations, and troubles,—that they would have laboured and drudged, and suffered and died, for the promotion of its success? No, my friends, this could never be. A behaviour so inconsistent with the known laws and constitution of human nature, is disclaimed as impossible by the common sense and feelings of mankind. Yet all this, the apostles

did. Their testimony therefore, may be safely relied upon as consonant to truth, which establishes at once the reality of the resurrection.

Besides, my friends, had the account of the resurrection been a fraudulent invention, is it to be imagined, that it would have gained the credit which it is known to have done? Is it to be imagined, that the belief of it would have been propagated so rapidly, and diffused so widely, which as history attests, it undoubtedly was? Is it to be imagined, that no obstacles by which it was opposed, that neither threats, nor promises, nor terrors, nor allurements, nor death in its most ghastly shapes, would have retarded its progress? Is it to be imagined, that not only the simple and unlettered, but the wise and the learned, would have been prevailed upon to embrace it? Is it to be imagined, in fine, that a baseless fabrick, (for such Christianity, which is built upon it, must be, if the resurrection of Jesus be not true) could have remained firm and unshaken amidst the storms of persecution, the shocks of passion, the assaults of infidelity, and the ravages of licentiousness, which it has been its lot to sustain during the long period of 1800 years, which have now elapsed from its first establishment? Surely not.

The truth of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, having been thus evinced by the sole light of unassisted reason, we will now proceed to contemplate it as it is exhibited to us by the more refulgent rays of the Gospel. Viewing it with the

aid of divine illumination which is thence derived, we shall find it to have been a triumph the most splendid in itself, and in its consequences the most important, that was ever displayed on the wide theatre of the universe. For what triumph can be thought more splendid, than that of a conqueror allowing himself to be reduced to the most abject state of depression, to be guarded by enemies, and opposed by obstacles apparently insurmountable; and then, by a single effort of his powerful arm, dissipating at once those enemies, removing those obstacles, and from a condition seemingly the most desperate and forlorn, emerging suddenly to a condition the most prosperous? Such, however, was the triumph achieved by the blessed Jesus in his resurrection from the dead. He had put himself in the power of his implacable enemies. He had suffered them to treat him with every indignity, and to fasten him at length with nails to an ignominious cross, on which he expired in excruciating torments. The sepulchre in which his body was entombed, was confided to the custody of a company of Roman soldiers; and the entrance into it was barred by a stone of enormous magnitude. And yet, hardly does the morning of the third day begin to dawn, than all at once the earth is convulsed, the soldiers, panic-struck, become as dead men, the stone is removed from its station, and full of life, and vigour, and immortality, Jesus arises triumphant from the tomb. Nor was it only over his earthly enemies, that Jesus tri-



umphed on the present occasion. No! He triumphed also over the prince of darkness. He triumphed over him in the very heart of his own empire,—in the very heart of that empire, the region of death, which the latter had treacherously acquired by the machinations of his wickedness. “For by one man,” says St. Paul, “sin came into the world, and by sin death, and so hath death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Yes, he triumphed over him even in the subterranean caverns of his dark domain, when breaking the bonds of mortality asunder, he returned victorious to the realm of light, bearing in the members of his own body, reanimated once more with the principle of life, and now rendered incorruptible and immortal, the rich spoils of the vanquished enemy; thus realizing in his own person that sublime observation of the Apostle of the Gentiles, in his Epistle to the Colossians, that “spoiling the principalities and powers, he made a shew of them confidently, triumphing openly over them in himself.” (COLOSS. *c.* ii. *v.* 15.) And well, my friends, may we, in contemplating a scene of such unparalleled grandeur, exclaim with St. Paul, in the language of the prophet: “O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?”

Nor was Jesus, like the most illustrious of earthly conquerors, in any degree indebted for the success of his enterprise to the valorous exertions of warlike followers, or his victory purchased at the expence of their blood. Nor was it saddened

by the tears of widows and of orphans, bewailing the loss of a husband or a parent in the glorious contest. No. He had no sharer whomsoever to divide with him the glory of his matchless exploit. The work was all his own. It was achieved by the sole unaided force of his own invincible arm : and the whole harvest of renown was reaped by himself alone. Tears, however, it is true, were shed, and blood was made to flow, ere the mighty battle was won. But the tears that were shed, (if we except those of his virgin mother, and of his weeping friends, which were soon wiped away by the consoling event of his resurrection) the tears, I say, that were shed, were his own tears, with which he compassionately lamented the blindness and insensibility of the unhappy children of Israel ; “because they did not know the time of their visitation.” And the blood which flowed so plentifully, was his own blood, which he generously poured out for the welfare of the human race.

Nor are the consequences resulting from the resurrection of Jesus less admirable than was the splendour which accompanied it. True indeed it is, that it was by his great sacrifice on the altar of the cross, that he accomplished in reality the work of man's redemption. For it was by that solemn act alone that he satisfied the *justice* of his eternal Father, and thus reconciled the maintenance of its interests with the manifestation of *mercy* to unhappy sinners. But in vain would that mo-

mentous object have been fully attained, if the persons benefited by it were unacquainted with it. In vain would our blessed Redeemer have made to his eternal Father an atonement for sin, if sinners remained ignorant of the acceptance of it. They would then be in the situation of wretched captives, who, although the bars of their prison should be broken asunder, and their chains loosed, yet, through their ignorance of those circumstances, would make no attempt to recover their liberty, but would continue in a state of miserable servitude. Now it is by the glorious event of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, that the interesting intelligence of the acceptance of his atonement is communicated to us. For in that illustrious act, we behold, as it were, that acceptance ratified by the broad seal of the Divinity. And in this sense may we understand the declaration of St. Paul, that "he died for our sins, and rose again for our justification." What a happy alteration, my friends, has this assurance produced, both in our present condition, and in our future prospects! By it we are convinced that we are no longer the hopeless slaves of Satan, bound round with the chains of sin, and utterly incapable of recovering our liberty. Nor do we now anticipate in despair the miseries of a destination still more wretched beyond the grave. For we are assured, by the great and glorious event which we this day commemorate, that our chains are broken, that our emancipation is effected, that the sentence of condemnation



which had been pronounced upon us, is now reversed, and that, instead of being “reserved under darkness in everlasting chains,” like the apostate angels of whom St. Jude speaks, “unto the judgment of the great day,”—“We are regenerated,” on the contrary, in the language of St. Peter, “unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven for us.” (1 PET. *c. i. v. 3, 4.* And that even our bodies, though consigned to the grave, and mouldered into dust, will be reared up again, at the last day, incorruptible and immortal ; and that re-united inseparably with their kindred spirits, they will enjoy conjointly with them an eternity of boundless and inexpressible felicity.

Let it be remembered, however, my friends, that the glorious victory of our immortal deliverer, will, in our regard, be null and void, unless it be followed up by our own exertions. For although the mighty battle has been fought and won, which has overthrown the empire of the prince of darkness, yet he is constantly endeavouring, by every means in his power, to recover the possession of his lost dominions. Hence are you to consider yourselves as constantly engaged in warfare with him, and as called upon, to exert your most strenuous efforts to frustrate his attempts. To each one of you, in particular, one fortress, at least, is committed in charge, which it is your duty to guard with the most watchful circumspection,

against the machinations of the enemy, and to defend with fortitude against his violent assaults. Yes, my friends, you must watch incessantly the motions of the adversary, that your immortal souls, those spiritual fortresses confided to your care, be not unfortunately taken by surprise. You must repel with vigour his more undisguised attacks, and secure yourselves against the effects of treachery within. You must be constantly upon your guard against the wily insinuations of vanity and pride. You must resist with energy temptations to impurity. You must stand calm and unruffled amidst provocations to anger. You must repress, by mortification, the propensities of corrupt nature, to prevent them from betraying you into the hands of the enemy. You must act, in short, on every occasion, like faithful, vigilant, and heroic champions of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Not only is it incumbent upon you to fight manfully the battles of the Lord, by your incessant opposition to sin in all its various shapes and guises, but it must also be your study to imitate the virtues of which his conduct exhibits to you so perfect a model. That ardent piety, that lowliness of mind, that lovely meekness, that patience and resignation, that conformity to the will of his heavenly Father, and, above all, that divine charity which shone forth so conspicuously in *him*, should also be of *your* characters the distinguishing ornaments.

Sensible, therefore, of the value of that spiritual

liberty, which, as freemen of Jesus Christ, we have the happiness to enjoy, let us not again subject ourselves to the bondage from which we have been delivered. Conscious of the grandeur of our exalted pretensions, let us not allow our minds to be debased by an attachment to low and ignoble objects. Let us rather, as the Apostle exhorts us, "seek (with a great and laudable ambition) the things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God." Let us, as the same Apostle admonishes us, "mind the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth." And finally, let the consideration of that blissful immortality which there awaits us, prompt us to that constant and steady perseverance in the practice of every Christian virtue, which alone can ultimately secure to us the attainment of it.



## SERMON XVIII.

## LOW SUNDAY.

## ON PEACE OF MIND AND HEART.

GOSPEL. *St. John*, xx. v. 19-31. At that time, when it was late that same day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, Peace be to you. And when he had said this, he shewed them his hands, and his side. The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord. He said therefore to them again, Peace be to you; as the Father hath sent me, I also send you. When he had said this he breathed on them, and he said to them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained. Now Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, We have seen the Lord. But he said to them, except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be to you. Then he saith to Thomas, Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands, and bring hither thy hand, and put it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing. Thomas answered, and said to him, My Lord, and my God. Jesus saith to him, because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed. Many other signs also did Jesus in the sight of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

THE Gospel of this Sunday presents us with an account of two distinct manifestations of himself, which our blessed Saviour made to his Apostles

after his resurrection from the dead. The first was in the evening of the very day on which that memorable event took place. The second was on the eighth day following it. On the former occasion, they are represented by the Evangelist, as assembled together in a room, with the doors closed, in order to preclude the intrusion of the Jews, by whom, very naturally, they were fearful of being disturbed, when Jesus is stated to have suddenly appeared amongst them, and to have greeted them in terms expressive of his benevolent disposition in their behalf. "Now when it was late the same day, being the first day of the week, and the doors were shut where the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and said to them, Peace be to you." In order to form a just notion of the impression which this extraordinary incident must have made upon their minds, it may be proper to consider the probable state of their feelings at this time, and the peculiar character of the situation in which they were placed. Of the state of their feelings at the present period, some conception may be formed, from the following circumstances recorded in holy writ. They had heard from the devout women who had visited the sepulchre, that the body of Jesus was no longer there; that a person in the form of a young man had declared him to be risen, adding that in Galilee they should themselves be witnesses of the truth of that declaration. They had been told by

Mary Magdalene, that *she* had actually *seen* him. "Mary Magdalene cometh, and telleth the disciples, I have seen the Lord." (JOHN, c. xx. v. 18.) They had been informed by Peter, that to *him* also he had made his appearance: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." (LUKE, c. xxiv. v. 34.) And finally, they had been just assured by two disciples on their return from Emmaus, that Jesus had joined them on their road to that city, and that he had made himself known to them in the breaking of bread. Such a variety of reports pouring in upon them from different quarters in rapid succession, all concurring to establish the same fact, must certainly be allowed to have been well calculated to induce them to believe it. That they did in reality entertain a strong disposition to give it credit, can hardly be doubted. But that their minds were completely satisfied upon the subject, we have the authority of Scripture itself for denying. For it is distinctly related by St. Mark, that when the very last account was delivered to them by the disciples from Emmaus, they still remained incredulous: "And they," says that Evangelist, "going, told it to the rest; neither did they believe them." (MARK, c. xvi. v. 13.) It is highly probable, indeed, that they may not have been without hopes of witnessing, with their own eyes, the reality of an event of which they had received such a diversity of reports. Those hopes, however, they certainly could never expect to be realized in the apartment in which they were then



shut up. Thus, my friends, were the Apostles situated, and such was the state of their minds, when suddenly they beheld a human form standing in the midst of them, and addressing them in the words of the salutation mentioned in the Gospel, "Peace be with you." So unaccountable an appearance threw them into the utmost consternation. They could not conceive that what they beheld was a real body. For how was it possible that a real body could make its way through the walls and doors which opposed its entrance? They took it therefore for an apparition. "But they," says St. Luke, in a parallel passage, "being troubled and affrighted, supposed that they saw a spirit." Their trouble, however, and alarm, were soon dispelled by the blessed Jesus, who, displaying to them the marks of the wounds which had been inflicted upon him, convinced them that the object which they saw in the midst of them, was truly their own Divine Master himself. "And when he had said this, he shewed them his hands and side." This conviction they manifested by the joy which it caused them to experience. "The disciples therefore were glad," says the sacred text, "when they saw the Lord." But as, in consequence of what had passed, they must still have been in considerable agitation of mind, Jesus, by an expression similar to that which he had used in stilling the storm at sea, restored peace to their troubled spirits: "and he said to them again, peace be to you." Nor was it to the Apostles alone that

he was desirous of imparting the invaluable blessing of peace, he also wished it to be communicated to his followers in general in that, as well as in every succeeding generation. And as he well knew, that this could not be done whilst that turbulent principle of disorder, sin, was in possession of their souls, he commissioned his Apostles, and their successors in the ministry, in virtue of that authority which he had himself received from his heavenly father, to remove an obstacle so hostile to the accomplishment of his benevolent design. "As the Father," said he, "hath sent me, I also send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them, and he said to them; receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." Such, my friends, were the circumstances which accompanied the first of the two manifestations which Christ made of himself to his Apostles, as recorded in this day's Gospel. One, however, of their number, it is to be observed, was absent on this occasion. "Now Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came." But arriving a short time afterwards, and being informed by his colleagues of the actual appearance of Jesus among them, which they themselves had witnessed, he peremptorily refused to believe it; and, like any modern infidel, he declared emphatically, that nothing short of the clearest evidence of his senses, should convince him of an event so extra-

ordinary and incredible. “The other disciples therefore said to him: we have seen the Lord. But he said to them: unless I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” In this disturbed state of mind was Thomas suffered to remain during an entire week. I call it disturbed, for such it must certainly have been, since the strong testimony which had been produced of Christ’s resurrection, though not sufficient to conquer his incredulity, must have occasioned within him no small degree of uneasiness on the subject. The eighth day at length arrives. The apostles, including Thomas, are again assembled together, as before, in a closed apartment: and, behold, Jesus appears in the midst of them, repeating to them in soothing accents his salutation of peace. “And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said: peace be to you.” What inexpressible joy must this second appearance of their Divine Master have excited in the breasts of the believing part of the Apostles! But with what confusion must it have overwhelmed the unbelieving Thomas! This Jesus undoubtedly perceived. Yet knowing that the incredulity of his beloved disciple, proceeded more from weakness of mind, than from pride of heart, he hastened to give that peace to his soul, which he had before imparted to the rest of the



apostles, by causing all his doubts to subside in the placid calm of unwavering conviction. For addressing him in terms of the most engaging condescension, he stretched out to him his blessed hands, still bearing the marks of the nails which had fastened him to the cross, presented to him his sacred side, on which was to be seen the scar of the wound inflicted by the spear, and thus offering him the very evidence which he had himself demanded, he only requested, that he, in return, would lay aside his wretched infidelity, and become, like the rest of his brethren, a firm believer. “Then he said to Thomas: put in thy finger hither, and see my hands; and bring hither thy hand, and put it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing.” So signal a manifestation of the resurrection of his divine Master, accompanied with so much condescension and goodness, completely overcame this incredulous disciple, and prompted him, in transports of admiration and gratitude, not only to confess the identity of his person, but to bear testimony also, to the divinity of his nature. “Thomas answered, and said to him: my Lord, and my God.” But although our blessed Saviour, in his infinite mercy, and with a view perhaps of furnishing an additional proof of the truth of his resurrection to future ages, deigned graciously to accede to this extraordinary demand of one whom he had selected to be a witness of that glorious event, yet he has intimated to us in his subsequent answer, that *we* are by no means

authorized to expect a similar favor ; but that we should rest satisfied with such grounds of credibility as have been accorded to us. “ Jesus saith to him: because thou hast *seen*, Thomas, thou hast believed ; blessed are they that have *not* seen, and have believed.” And to strengthen our faith, which the well attested miracles recorded in the Gospel are calculated to produce, the Evangelist has farther assured us, that Jesus performed a multiplicity of other prodigies of which his disciples were eye witnesses, which he has not committed to writing ; and that those which he has related are to be considered only as specimens of his marvellous works, that the consideration of them may induce us to acknowledge him to be the Son of God ; and that by faith in him (which implies not only the belief of his doctrines, but the observance of his divine ordinances) we may secure to ourselves the blessing of everlasting life. “ Many other signs also did Jesus in the sight of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that you may believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in his name.”

In this day's Gospel, which I have thus expounded to you, our blessed Saviour presents himself before us in the endearing character of a harbinger of peace. “ Peace be to you,” were the words, in which he announced himself to his assembled apostles on the day of his resurrection, and by which he calmed the tumult of their fluc-

tuating minds. The same salutation accompanied his appearance eight days afterwards, when he restored tranquillity to the soul of St. Thomas, of which his incredulity had unhappily deprived him. And the power with which he invested his apostles of releasing sinners from the bonds of guilt, was, in reality, a power to give peace to their souls, by removing the causes of intestine war. But what is the nature of that peace, so soothingly proclaimed in the Gospel, by this celestial herald? Why, my friends, I know not how to convey to your minds a better notion of it, than by borrowing the terms in which it is described by the Apostle of the Gentiles, in his affectionate address to the faithful of Philippi, when he says, “and the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” (PHIL. *c.* iv. *v.* 7.) The peace, therefore, which is here spoken of, is a calm serenity of soul, descending from above, and diffusing its celestial influence over the mind and heart. This peace of the mind and of the heart, is the result of a complete exemption of the former from the disquietude of doubt; and of the latter, from tumultuous feelings of remorse. Where this twofold exemption is discovered, there also the effect which it fails not to produce, may safely be pronounced to exist. But where either of them is wanting, where either the mind is agitated with doubt, or the heart labours under the remorse of guilt, there “the peace of God, which surpasseth all under-



standing," can not possibly be allowed to reside. That peace then, I say, which our blessed Saviour communicated to his apostles, and which he is willing to extend to all his followers, implies, in the first place, a mind exempt from all uncertainty respecting the truths which he has condescended to reveal. "For he that wavereth," observes St. James, "is like a wave of the sea, which is driven and tossed about with the wind." (JAMES, *c. i. v. 6.*) Yes, my friends, he is like a wave of the sea "being tossed to and fro," as St. Paul expresses it, "by every wind of doctrine." And how is that settled and immoveable conviction of the truths of revelation, which excludes from the mind every degree of hesitation, to be acquired by us? Why, it is by listening to the voice of Christ himself, speaking to us by the authority of his infallible Church, to the governors of which he said in explicit terms, "he who heareth you, heareth me." Yes, my friends, it is by anchoring our little barks on the solid rock of God's unerring Church, that they are to be prevented from being upset, or dashed to pieces by the billows of error, which encompass them around in every direction on the tempestuous ocean of the world. In vain will you attempt to satisfy your minds by a diligent perusal of the sacred scriptures. The scriptures, we know from their own authority, contain doctrines difficult to be understood, "which the unlearned and the unstable are liable to wrest to their own destruction." (2 PETER, *c. iii. v. 16.*) And experience

proves, that all the errors which have sprung up in the Church of Christ, from its first establishment to the present day, have invariably originated in wrong interpretations of the inspired volume. Thus, to use the language of the Apostle, has "the truth of God been changed into a lie." (ROM. c. i. v. 25.) And the richest treasure of celestial wisdom, that was ever bestowed on the children of men, for their instruction and edification, has been perverted into an instrument of delusion and perdition. Nor should this be to us a subject of surprise; since we learn from holy Simeon, that even the divine founder of Christianity himself, though he came into the world for the salvation of mankind, "was born nevertheless unto the ruin, as well as unto the resurrection of many." (LUKE, c. ii. v. 34.) It is needless, however, my Catholic friends, in addressing *you*, to pursue this part of the subject any farther; since you are not only convinced in speculation, of the necessity of erecting the edifice of your faith on the foundation of the authority of the Church of Christ, in order to secure it from the fluctuations of doubt; but you also adhere in practice to this fundamental principle of your religious creed, so essential to the attainment of that tranquillity of mind, which I represented to you as the first quality of that heavenly peace announced by our blessed Saviour to his apostles in this day's Gospel.

I will now therefore proceed to the consideration of the second quality of that greatest of blessings

which it is possible for a human being to enjoy on this side the grave, which consists in an entire exemption of the heart from the remorse occasioned by deadly sin. Of the absolute necessity of immunity from guilt, for the acquisition of that invaluable "peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding," a stronger proof can hardly be adduced, than that contained in the declaration of the prophet, when he solemnly assures us in the name of the Almighty, that there is no peace to the wicked. "There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord of hosts." How, in reality, can that man be thought to enjoy repose of soul, who bears within him a secret monitor, constantly reminding him of his sinful state, reproaching him with his foul and criminal disorders, and terrifying him with the prospect of God's avenging justice? How can he enjoy repose of soul, when standing before the tribunal of his own conscience, he finds himself there convicted by witnesses, whose testimony it is not possible for him to gainsay, of his numerous violations of that divine law, which he is commanded to observe? How can he enjoy repose of soul, when thus convicted and condemned at the bar of his own conscience, he anticipates his appearance in the presence of that just and inexorable Judge, before whom, he knows, he shall be hereafter summoned to take his trial, and whose sentence will fix his lot for eternity. How, in short, is it possible, that he should enjoy repose of soul, whilst his mind is as it were haunted by a



tremendous spectre, plunging with one hand into his guilty heart the dagger of remorse, and brandishing with the other the dreadful scourge of provoked Omnipotence? No, my friends, there is no peace for the workers of iniquity. "Destruction and unhappiness are in their ways," says the Psalmist, "and the way of peace they have not known." (PSALM xiii. v. 7.) They may be in possession of all the advantages which the world bestows on its most favored votaries. They may abound with riches, riot in pleasures, and crowned with the proudest honors of the state, they may rear their heads aloft, like the cedars of Libanus. But they have not peace. No. They have not that first of human blessings, without which no real and substantial satisfaction is anywhere to be found, and the enjoyment of which will supply the place of every other. They may appear to the eye of superficial observers, to be the happiest of human beings. But they are not so in reality. For their happiness does not depend upon the opinions of others, but upon those which they entertain of themselves: and though all mankind should conspire in thinking them the most enviable of mortals, yet that would not extract from their guilty bosoms the envenomed dagger which torments them within. They may pretend perhaps themselves (though that, they will not always do,) to be perfectly free from all inward trouble, and to enjoy that peace and quiet of mind, which only a conscience void of reproach, is privileged to bestow. It is in the season

however of jollity, it is amidst the intoxications of pleasure, it is on occasions in short when they are least qualified to form a correct judgment of their real situation, that they are heard to deliver these boasting pretensions. But only follow them into retirement, only follow them into their secret closets, and there when the heat of the passions shall have subsided, interrogate them respecting the state of their feelings, and if they answer you with sincerity, the account they will give of themselves, will be very different. Yet, should the case be otherwise ; should they still persist in the same pretensions, I do not hesitate to say, that the outward professions of their lips will be belied by the inward testimony of their hearts. Of this, the Spirit of God assures us by the mouth of his prophet, who represents them as saying “ peace, peace, when there is no peace.” (JER. c. vi.) In vain would they endeavour to stifle the voice of conscience, in order to secure to themselves a false tranquillity. For in spite of their exertions to that effect, circumstances will in all probability occur in which it *will* make itself heard. And though even they should unfortunately succeed in suppressing completely the disquieting importunities of that upbraiding monitor, the deceitful calm which would thence ensue, would be, in its ultimate consequences, ten thousand times more dreadful than all the troubles which it was intended to remedy. A calm like this, would be the fatal prelude to the most destructive storm. It would be a calm, preceding the tremendous storm of

the divine vengeance, which bursting upon them with irresistible fury at the period of their dissolution, would involve them in endless and irretrievable ruin.

It is only therefore by walking in the paths of righteousness that you are to expect to find "that peace of God which surpasseth all understanding," which is sought in vain in the ways of iniquity. There indeed you will be sure to meet with it. Yes, you will there experience that divine peace which no circumstances nor events will be able to affect. For what earthly contingency will be capable of disturbing the peace of those who make invariably the law of God the rule of their conduct? Should he visit them with afflictions, they will receive them with submission from his providential hand, as trials to which he may deem it expedient to subject their fidelity. Should he suffer persecutions to be raised against them, they will consider them as pledges of that everlasting happiness, which he has encouraged them to look forward to in a future state, assuring them that "their reward shall be great in heaven." Should he permit them to be deprived of health and vigor, they will console themselves with the consideration, that not being any longer able to act, they are in a condition at least to suffer in his service. Should he allow them to sustain losses in their temporal possessions, or to be reduced even to a state of indigence and distress; still will their resignation to his divine appointments,



preserve unruffled the tranquillity of their souls. Should their reputations be assailed by the tongues of slander, they will avail themselves of the opportunities which will be then afforded them of exercising the virtues of charity and patience. And though all their undertakings should prove unsuccessful, their inward peace will still remain uninjured, since they will be satisfied that the dispensations of the Most High in their regard, however contrary to their wishes and expectations, will be more conducive to their real interest, than the most brilliant success. Nor will any unruly passions disturb the harmony prevailing within them. For the law of the Lord being the ruling principle of their souls, will keep their passions under due restraint, and prevent them from breaking out into unwarrantable excesses.

Such, my friends, is the happy state of the servants of God, whose faith is established on the unerring authority of his infallible church, and whose conduct is regulated by his holy law. They are in possession at once of that unalterable peace both of mind and heart which it is not in the power of the world either to give or to take away. And their condition, my friends, will be most assuredly yours, if you imitate their example. "The peace of God which surpasseth all understanding, will also keep your minds and hearts," and it will prepare you moreover for the enjoyment of everlasting felicity in his heavenly kingdom.

## SERMON XIX.

### THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

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#### ON THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

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GOSPEL. *St. John*, x. v. 11-16. At that time, Jesus said to the Pharisees, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep; but the hireling and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and flieth, and the wolf catcheth, and scattereth the sheep; and the hireling flieth, because he is a hireling, and he hath no care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know me. As the father knoweth me, and I know the father, and I lay down my life for my sheep. And other sheep I have that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

ONE of the characters, and that assuredly by no means the least pleasing among them, in which the prophets have represented the person of the promised Messiah, is that of a shepherd. "I will set up one shepherd over them, said the Lord God by the voice of the Prophet Ezechiel, and he shall feed them, even my servant David." (EZEC. c. xxxiv. v. 23.) "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd," were the terms in which Isaiah was commissioned by the great Jehovah to announce the same august personage; "he shall gather together the lambs with his arm, and shall take them up in his bosom, and he himself shall carry them that are with

young," (ISAIAH c. xl. v. 11.) And it is in this pastoral character that our blessed Saviour exhibits himself to us in the Gospel of this Sunday. But in order to distinguish himself from these mercenary intruders into the office of shepherd whom he denominates hirelings, he appropriates to himself the epithet of *good*. "I," says he, "am the *good* shepherd." And he justifies his title to that distinctive appellation by the sacrifice which he is prepared to make of his life for the protection of his flock. "The good shepherd, (he adds) giveth his life for his sheep." The persons whom he calls hirelings, I conceive to be those false and deceitful pretenders to the character of Messiah of whom he himself spoke on another occasion, when he said, "there shall arise false Christs and false prophets. (MATT. c. xxiv. v. 24.) and who, as we learn from the Jewish historian, Josephus, like the hireling described in the gospel, as betaking himself to flight when he beholds the wolf coming, did actually urge their deluded followers to rebel against the Roman government, and then abandon them to the fury of the soldiers who were sent against them. Of this, a remarkable instance is recorded by the Jewish historian, who, after having mentioned that a number of impostors and deceivers persuaded the people to follow them into the wilderness, has given the following statement. "About the same time came a man out of Egypt to Jerusalem, who said he was a prophet, and having prevailed upon a con-



siderable number of the lower class of people to follow him to the Mount of Olives, he told them that thence they should see the walls of Jerusalem fall down at his command, and promised thus to open to them an entrance into the city. But Felix (the Roman governor), being informed of these things, ordered his soldiers to their arms. And marching out of Jerusalem with a large body of horse and foot, he marched upon the Egyptian, and killed four hundred of them, and took two hundred prisoners. But the Egyptian getting out of the fight, escaped." (JOSEPHUS ANT. *l.* 20. *c.* 8.) How strikingly does this narrative correspond with the words of the Gospel, "but the hireling, and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and flieth, and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep." Our blessed Saviour next proceeds to assign the cause of the treacherous conduct of the false pretenders to the character of Messiah, ascribing it explicitly to their mercenary dispositions, which prompt them, regardless of the welfare of their followers, to devote the whole of their attention and care to the exclusive promotion of their own selfish interests. "And the hireling flieth, because he is a hireling, and he careth not for the sheep." As an additional vindication of his right to the pastoral character which he assumes in the Gospel, he challenges to himself that distinctive mark by which the real shepherd of a flock may be plainly recognised,

which is, that of their mutual acquaintance with each other. "I," says he, "am the good shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know me." He then explains the nature of that reciprocal knowledge subsisting between himself and his flock, and describes it as bearing a similitude to that which subsists between himself and his heavenly Father ; "As the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father." Since, therefore, the knowledge the Father had of him, was Divine, and consequently the most perfect in every respect, and as his knowledge of his Father was accompanied with a constant and unremitting endeavour, to act in all things conformably to his holy will ; it follows, that the intimate and comprehensive knowledge which this good shepherd possesses of every individual of his extensive flock, being also divine, embraces at once all their wants, concerns, and interests, and whatever may be in any manner connected with them, and that they on the other hand, who are truly in the number of his sheep, will be ever ready to obey his pastoral injunctions. As the best proof of his complete and unreserved conformity to his Father's will, he subjoins his readiness to lay down his life in compliance with it, for the well being of his flock, and thus intimates to his faithful adherents, that they also should be disposed to make the same sacrifice, should he require it of them. "And I lay down my life for my sheep." But although the persons, who had hitherto been induced to profess them-

selves his followers, were of the Jewish nation, yet he speaks of others who were not of that nation, to whom his Gospel had not yet been announced, whom, nevertheless, on account of their inward dispositions, he already recognizes as a part of his flock. Those he declares it to be his intention to call to the faith, and adds, that, without any distinction of Jew and Gentile, all, like sheep, shall be collected, as it were, together into one fold, and be subject to the government of the universal shepherd. "And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and they shall be one fold and one shepherd." How completely this prediction was verified, appears from the rapid and extensive propagation of the Christian religion among the votaries of paganism, which is attested by documents of unimpeachable authenticity.

Having thus expounded to you the text of this day's Gospel, permit me to call your attention to the charming picture with which it presents us of the genius of Christianity. Image to yourselves, my friends, a shepherd seated on an eminence, whilst his flock are grazing below in the meadow. See him there, directing perpetually his eyes to every part of his fleecy care, and watching assiduously their looks and motions. How placid are his thoughts! How calm his feelings! What a delightful serenity prevails around! What a sooth-



ing stillness ! Removed from the noisy haunts of men, he hears no sound, save that perhaps of the breeze that whispers through the air, or the murmur of the brook that glides below, or of the tremulous bleatings of his own sheep that ascend from the valley. And the sheep too, those quiet, harmless, inoffensive animals, among whom no strife, nor discord, nor contention, any where appears, what an expressive image do they exhibit of concord and harmony ! Behold, my friends, in the pastoral scene which I have laid before you, an imperfect representation of the Christian economy. For the Divine Author of that economy, even the blessed Jesus himself, that “good shepherd, who has graciously laid down his life for his sheep,” is now actually seated on his heavenly mount, where surrounded on all sides with peace and happiness, he superintends in person his sheep below, who are grazing even in this vale of tears, amidst delightful pastures, which his bounty has prepared for them. Yes, my friends, “the Lord,” as the inspired Psalmist exclaims, “is our shepherd, and he has set us in a place of pasture.” (Ps. xxi.) He provides those who belong to his flock with the richest pastures, protects them from enemies by whom they are liable to be assailed, and should any of them, seduced in an unguarded moment, unfortunately go astray, he fails not to raise immediately his voice to recall them from their wanderings ; and when he perceives them returning, goes forth to meet them, and, with infinite condescen-

sion, laying them on his shoulders, restores them to the situation which they had unhappily deserted. He provides them, I say, in the first place, with the richest pastures. The pastures to which I allude, are those spiritual blessings with which he furnishes them in exuberant profusion. They are that "peace of God which surpasseth all understanding,"—"that faith by which the just man liveth," (ROM. c. i. v. 17)—"that hope which confoundeth not," (ROM. c. v. v. 5)—"that charity which casteth out fear," (1 JOHN, c. iv. v. 18)—that patience in tribulation,—that joy in the holy spirit,—those celestial influences, which are communicated to them through the channels of the sacraments; and above all, that divine food, which, in the adorable sacrament of the altar, refreshes, exhilarates, and invigorates, their souls in every stage of their mortal existence. Such, my friends, are the abundant provisions which this good shepherd makes for the sheep of his pasture, during their earthly sojournment. They possess, in the inward testimony of their consciences, which is that "peace of God surpassing all understanding," an inexhaustible fund of enjoyment, of which it is not in the power of the world to deprive them. I do not mean a presumptuous sense of their own righteousness, which is apt to beget, in the minds of enthusiasts, an unwarrantable degree of exultation; for although, like St. Paul, they be not conscious to themselves of guilt, yet, like him, they do not therefore hold themselves justified. But knowing

at the same time, as that great apostle did, that he who judges them, is the Lord; knowing also from holy writ, that that same Lord, is compassionate, and merciful, patient, and plenteous in mercy; knowing, that he is not extreme to mark what has been done amiss, but, that for the sake of his beloved Son, who died for sinners, he will graciously condescend to accept their endeavours to serve him, notwithstanding the imperfections which must unavoidably accompany them; they rely with confidence on his indulgent tenderness, and feel secure and happy in the arms of his protection. With respect to the earth which they are doomed to inhabit, they neither consider it, like licentious worldlings, as the seat of all their happiness, nor do they, like dark and gloomy fanatics, contemplate it as a region of complete wretchedness. But viewing it in its true and proper light,—viewing it, as in fact it is,—viewing it, that is to say, as a probationary state, as a mixed state of pleasure and of pain, they endeavour, in compliance with the design of its Divine Author, to accommodate themselves to it. Hence, whilst on the one hand, they receive with thankfulness, and use with temperance, the good things of the world which may be allotted to them, they submit, on the other hand, with becoming resignation, to the evils which may befall them, and bear them with christian patience. Regarding themselves as travellers through a strange country, on their journey homewards, they do not expect



to find every thing on the road conformable to their wishes. They do not flatter themselves that the weather will be always fair, nor the roads smooth, nor the country pleasant, nor the accommodations eligible. But they make up their minds, at all events, to pursue their journey with steadiness and perseverance. Should circumstances be, in every respect, favorable to them, they are not insensible to the delight which they afford. Should the country through which they pass be pleasant and fruitful, they do not think themselves bound to shut their eyes to the prospects which it exhibits, nor do they conceive themselves forbidden to partake of the comforts which present themselves to them. By no means. They look, on the contrary, with pleasure, on the beautiful scenes which they behold around them, and enjoy with gratitude the various refreshments they meet with in their way. But, should every thing be the reverse of what I have described ; should the weather be foul, the roads rugged, the country dreary, and barren, they still contrive to make themselves comfortable. For wrapping themselves, as it were, up in the mantle of their resignation, they are protected by it from the inclement season ; whilst the animating thought of that delightful home, to which they are hastening, where every thing, they know, will correspond with their desires, reconciles them to all the inconveniences, and unpleasantness, they may possibly experience. Thus, whatever may be their earthly condition, prosperous, or calamitous,

opulent, or indigent, elevated, or lowly, they go through life with content and cheerfulness. They may discover, perhaps, during their mortal course, appearances of disorder offensive to their sight, as seemingly incompatible with the divine attributes of the great source of universal order. They may perceive, for instance, the wicked prosperous, and the virtuous oppressed, and their moral feelings may possibly receive a transient shock, from circumstances of this description. But their uneasiness is soon removed from their minds, by the consideration of the nature of their present situation, which allows them to take but a partial and contracted view of the works of Omnipotence. And they comfort themselves with the persuasion, that when they shall have reached the summit of that Holy Mount to which they are advancing, and from which they will be indulged with a comprehensive view of the universal system, they will distinctly see that those scenes of apparent disorder, which viewed separately are so displeasing to their sight, contribute in combination, like shades in a picture, to the perfection of the whole. If to the satisfaction they derive from the light in which they view the external objects with which they are connected, as well as from the inward testimony of their consciences, be added that rich and copious supply of the graces of heaven, with which their souls are nourished and exhilarated, in their devout intercourse with their Supreme Good, it surely will not be denied that

their good shepherd is careful to furnish them with whatever may be requisite for their support and comfort. What unspeakable consolation, delight, and joy, spring up in their hearts when they are engaged in religious exercises ! What exquisite satisfaction do they experience from the sentiments of adoration, love, and gratitude, which they pour forth on those occasions to the supreme object of their affections ! How cheering, how invigorating, how animating, the impressions made upon their souls by the contemplation of his divine perfections, by the recollection of the instances of boundless love which he has manifested in their regard, and the opening prospect of that everlasting felicity which he has promised shall be hereafter the reward of their fidelity ! Finally, how was it possible for this good shepherd to provide more effectually for the sustenance of his sheep, than by imparting to them a food of an imperishable nature, which endureth unto everlasting life ? Now *that* he has actually done in the adorable sacrament of the altar, in which he has graciously bequeathed to them his own body and blood for their nourishment and support.

Not only does our blessed Saviour, like a good shepherd, furnish his beloved followers, those dear objects of his pastoral solicitude, with an ample supply of whatever may contribute to their maintenance and comfort, but encompassing them also with a strong and lofty fence, he protects them from the dangers to which they are exposed



from their infernal enemy, who, like a prowling wolf, or rather, to use the language of St. Peter, "like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist ye," adds the same Apostle, "strong in faith." Faith then, my friends, is that strong and lofty fence, with which this good shepherd secures his darling flock against the hostile attempts of their merciless adversary. And, as long as they continue within that divine inclosure, all his endeavours to do them an injury are ineffectual and vain. For what temptation to sin can prevail against the soul of that true believer, whose mind is influenced by a lively faith? Shall *he* allow himself to be seduced from the path of duty, who, by faith, is made sensible of the charms of virtue, and of the deformity of vice? Shall any consideration persuade him to give offence to that heavenly shepherd, whose inexpressible goodness and condescension in his behalf, faith displays to him in such captivating colors? Shall he, for the sake of a momentary gratification, consent to forfeit that glorious inheritance in God's heavenly kingdom, which faith represents to him as comprising enjoyments that infinitely surpass whatever it is in the power of imagination to conceive? No, my friends, whilst his mind is thus securely guarded by reflections like these, which faith fails not to raise up around it, he is in no danger whatever of becoming a prey to the enemy. But unfortunately, it sometimes happens, that incautiously leaving his place of safety, by withdrawing himself

from the protecting influence of faith, he heedlessly strays into the paths of guilt, and thus unprotected, he is exposed every moment to the fury of the devourer.

Yes, my friends, such, alas, is the infirmity of human nature, such the unfortunate propensity to evil which we have contracted from our birth, such are the temptations to unlawful gratification with which we are encompassed, that the powerful motives alone which faith presents to our view, are sufficient to keep us within the bounds of duty. When a Christian therefore, in an unguarded moment, loses sight of those exalted motives, he is immediately open to the allurements of seduction, and being enticed by them into the broad road of guilt, he is exposed to the danger of eternal perdition. But mark the kind and compassionate condescension of the heavenly shepherd. No sooner does he perceive that his poor heedless sheep has wandered from its inclosure, than without delay he goes in pursuit of it. "And when he hath found it, lays it upon his shoulders rejoicing, and carrying it home, calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost." What a delightful description is this, which is given to us by the sacred Scripture, of the kind and merciful conduct of the Redeemer of mankind towards sinners. He pursues them as it were in their sinful course, by the operations of his grace; he solicits them by considerations which he sug-

gests to their minds, and by the impressions which he produces on their hearts, to repentance and amendment. And having happily succeeded in the attainment of his object, he re-establishes them in the possession of all the advantages which they before enjoyed. Such, my friends, is the inexpressible goodness and mercy manifested by our blessed Saviour to the sheep of his pasture, in the character of the good shepherd.

But remember, my friends, at the same time, that in order to qualify yourselves to be fit objects of his pastoral attention, you must manifest in yourselves the distinguishing characteristics which mark his sheep. What those distinguishing characteristics are, we may learn from the declaration of the good shepherd himself, who, in the chapter from which the Gospel of this Sunday is taken, is recorded to have said: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Hence it appears, that if you wish to be classed in the number of his sheep, you must hear his voice and follow him. But how, it may be asked, are we to hear his voice and to follow him? Why, my friends, to hear, in the first place, the voice of the good shepherd, is to yield an entire and unhesitating submission to the directions of those to whose pastoral care he has confided the concerns of his beloved flock:—"He who heareth you, heareth me." It is to listen with attention to his heavenly admonitions, whether officially announced to you by the ministers of his word,



or privately conveyed to you by written documents, or still more secretly whispered to your souls by the inspirations of his grace ; and it is to be influenced moreover, by that celestial voice, in all the various circumstances of your condition to which its accents are usually adapted. What, in the next place, is it to follow him, but to imitate the virtues which he exemplified in his conduct ? Yes, my friends, it is to exhibit in your lives, that piety towards God, that benevolence to man, that lowliness of mind, that purity of heart, that meekness under provocations, that patience in afflictions, and that conformity in short in all things, to the will of the Most High, of which your dear good shepherd was so perfect a model. If in this manner, you be careful to hear his voice and to follow him, he has himself assured you, that he, on his part, will acknowledge you for his sheep, and that as such, he will hereafter conduct you safely to the happy pastures of life eternal. “ My sheep, (says he,) hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give them life everlasting.”

## SERMON XX.

## THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

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ON THE PLEASURES OF A PIOUS AND RELIGIOUS LIFE.

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GOSPEL. *St. John*, xvi. v. 16-22. At that time Jesus said to his disciples, A little while, and now you shall not see me; and again a little while, and you shall see me; because I go to the Father. Then some of his disciples said one to another, What is this that he saith to us, A little while, and you shall not see me; and again a little while, and you shall see me, and, because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we know not what he speaketh. And Jesus knew that they had a mind to ask him, and he said to them, Of this do you inquire among yourselves, because I said, A little while, and you shall not see me; and again a little while, and you shall see me? Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labor, hath sorrow, because the hour is come; but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. So also you indeed have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you.

“A LITTLE while, and now you shall not see me; and again a little while, and you shall see me; because I go to the Father.” These words were part of a discourse delivered by our blessed Saviour to his disciples on the approach of his passion. But such were the prejudices which, in common with the rest of their countrymen, they

had unfortunately imbibed respecting the Messiah, such was yet the worldly temper and disposition of their minds, that they were utterly unable to comprehend their meaning. Like the rest of the Jewish people, they fondly imagined, that the promised Messiah was to be a great, powerful, and magnificent prince, whose reign would be permanent. And as they believed their divine Master to be that promised Messiah, they were at a loss to reconcile the permanence of his dominion with the short duration which he seemed to announce of his residence among them. Hence those perplexities which arose in their minds—which some of them expressed one to another in the following terms, recorded by the Evangelist:—"What is this that he sayeth, a little while? we know not what he speaketh." Jesus, however, perceiving their embarrassment, and designing probably to impress their minds with an idea of his character which might counteract thoughts so injurious to him, which the humiliations and sufferings he was about to undergo would be calculated to excite, shewed them that he was acquainted with their most secret deliberations. "And Jesus knew that they had a mind to ask him, and he said to them, Of this do you inquire among yourselves, because I said, A little while, and you shall not see me; and again a little while, and you shall see me." And, in order to prepare them for the melancholy scenes which they were shortly to witness, he informed them that they were on the eve of great



troubles, and that those troubles would moreover be embittered with the mortifying exultation of their triumphant enemies. Yet, that they might not be discouraged by this distressing intelligence, he comforted them with the prospect of the happy change which would take place in their condition. “Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” Adverting then to the feelings of a woman, during the course, and at the close of her labor of parturition,—whose pangs, in the first instance, are amply compensated by the satisfaction which, in the second, she derives from the contemplation of her new-born infant,—he tells them that such shall be the grateful transition from grief to joy, which it will be their lot to experience. The anguish, he intimates, which they will have to sustain, when they behold *him*, whom they love and venerate, despised, insulted, scourged, and put at length to a cruel and ignominious death, will be painful as that of a woman in the former of the situations which have been already described; but, alluding to the subsequent event of his resurrection, by which he will be, as it were, regenerated to life immortal, he immediately adds, that they shall see him again—yes, that they shall see him again in that glorious state of renovated existence, in which he will appear when, from the womb, as it were, of the grave, he shall have issued triumphant over death and hell; and that

then their transient and evanescent sorrows will be succeeded by heartfelt and unalterable joy, of which it will not be in the power of the world to deprive them. "A woman, when she is in labor, hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. So also you now indeed have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you."

That joy of heart which our blessed Saviour promised to his apostles when they should see him again after his resurrection from the tomb, and which no man, he told them, should take from them, may justly be ascribed to his faithful disciples of every age and nation. For why did the hearts of the apostles rejoice when they beheld their beloved master restored to life, but because they discovered in that illustrious event a vindication of his pretensions to the divinity of his mission, and consequently a confirmation of all those consoling and exhilarating doctrines which he had previously delivered? But have not all his faithful disciples the same ground of heartfelt exultation which the apostles had? Although, like the latter, they have not the privilege of witnessing with their senses the reality of his resurrection, yet are they not convinced of it by the strongest grounds of credibility which were ever produced in support of an historic fact? Have they not, there-

fore, the same reason which the apostles had, to consider him as an accredited delegate from heaven,—and the doctrines which he announced, as sanctioned, of course, by the authority of him by whom he was sent? And may not the language which was used by St. Peter, in his first Epistle, be with propriety applied to them, when he says, “whom having *not* seen, you love; in whom also, though you see him *nó*t, you believe, and believing, shall rejoice with unspeakable and glorious joy, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls?” (1 PET. *c. i. v. 8, 9.*) Yes, my friends, their faith, the faith of the true disciples of Jesus Christ, of every age and nation, presents them assuredly with subjects of joy superior to every other which can possibly occupy the mind of man. For by it they see, placed beyond the possibility of doubt, the truth of all those joyful discoveries which have been graciously made to them by the Redeemer of mankind. Firmly persuaded of this fundamental article of their religious creed—believing that Jesus arose from the dead, they are consequently assured that all his doctrines must be necessarily true. And oh! how replete with comfort and satisfaction are those celestial doctrines! What more delightful to a poor unhappy sinner, conscious of having incurred the displeasure of his Maker, and dreading the punishment which he has justly merited, than the consideration of a kind and powerful Mediator between himself and the Omnipotent Being whom he has



wickedly offended—a Mediator, who, by his gracious interposition, has furnished him with the means of forgiveness and reconciliation? What more cheering than the contemplation of the change which the boundless love of his merciful Redeemer has effected in his condition? What more animating than the prospect displayed to him of a blissful immortality, to which he is encouraged to exalt his pretensions? Instead of viewing himself as a degraded slave of the prince of darkness, a child of wrath, an object of malediction, a condemned criminal, a wretched outcast in the universe of God,—he is authorized to regard himself as a fellow-citizen of the saints, a child of benediction, an heir of God, and co-heir with Christ. Instead of looking upon himself as a being abandoned to the versatility of chance, and destined to be the sport of every contingency, he is taught to consider himself as a special object of the providential care of his Father who is in heaven. Instead of being terrified at the prospect of the tomb as the extinguisher of his existence, or, what is still incomparably more dreadful, as an opening into a gulf of unutterable and endless woe,—he hails it, on the contrary, as the gate which leads to the mansions of everlasting felicity. Is it not reasonable, then, my friends, I ask, for the faithful disciples of Jesus Christ—for men whose minds are habitually filled with these exalted views, and accustomed to range among these divine objects—to experience the highest

degree of satisfaction? The thoughts which spring up within them in these heavenly meditations give a joyful tinge to every stage of their existence. They brighten the past by the cheering retrospect of the mercy of the Most High, graciously manifested in pardoning their offences, and restoring them to the privileges of his adopted children. They shed a lustre over the present by representing him as rewarding with his benignant smiles their honest endeavours to serve him, clasping them in the embraces of his paternal protection, and rendering every thing subservient to their welfare. "For to those who love God all things," says the Apostle, "work together unto good." And they illuminate the future with that refulgent scene of glory which he has reserved for them in heaven, when, like the Apostle of the Gentiles, having fought the good fight, and preserved the faith, they shall have reached the end of their mortal career.

Nor is the influence of these contemplations restricted in its operation by times, places, circumstances, or conditions. For, whatever may be the period of life of the persons who cultivate them, whatever part of the world they may be in, whatever rank they may hold in society, whatever may be the occupations annexed to their situations, or whatever in other respects may be the complexion of their lot, they fail not to possess, in their heavenly frame of mind, a constant source of consolation and of joy. And the beautiful lines

of the Roman orator in expatiating on the advantages of literary pursuits, may, with at least equal propriety, be applied in like manner to religious contemplations. “ They are the food of youth, the delight of old age; they adorn prosperity, they afford a refuge and consolation in adversity; they please at home, they are no impediment abroad; they pass the night with us, they attend us on our travels, they accompany us into our retirements.”\*

Think not, my friends, that the joys which I have attributed to the faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, as the never-failing effects of their celestial temper of mind, are visionary and chimerical. No, my friends; they are not. They are true, real, and substantial joys. And such, I will take upon myself to say, that you yourselves will acknowledge them to be, if, like them, you will only make the experiment—if, as you are invited by the Psalmist, like them, you will “ taste how sweet the Lord is.” In the mean time, for the truth of my observations, I refer you to the good and pious of every age and nation, who have actually realized them. I refer you without hesitation to those devout practisers of the evangelical counsels, of either sex, whose habitual cheerfulness is an unequivocal indication of the heartfelt satisfaction which prevails within them. I refer you to the apostles, who, as St. Luke relates, rejoiced that they were found worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus. (Acts, c. v. v. 41.) I refer you

\* Cicero's Oration *pro Archia Poeta*.



to the Apostle of the Gentiles in particular, who "counted all things to be loss for the excellent knowledge of his Lord Christ Jesus." (PHIL. *c.* iii. *v.* 8.) I refer you to the martyrs of the church of God, whose minds appeared to be so completely absorbed by the joy which they felt in their heavenly contemplations, as to render them in a manner insensible to the most excruciating torments inflicted upon them by their barbarous persecutors.

Libertines, I well know, who have no other notion of enjoyment than that which is derived from the indulgence of their sensual appetites, will treat this language with contempt and ridicule, as the senseless rant of a religious enthusiast. But this is by no means an argument of its absurdity. It only proves their inability to comprehend it. Nor should we be surprised at this, since "the sensual man," as St. Paul observes, "perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand, because it is spiritually examined." (1 Cor. *c.* ii. *v.* 14.) What! are there not other gratifications besides those of sense, from which men derive considerable delight? Are there not such pleasures as those of the understanding, of the imagination, and of sentiment? Does not the pursuit of truth, and the cultivation of elegant literature, furnish the mind with most agreeable occupation? Are not mathematical, physical, and philological investigations, rich sources of rational amusement to those who are engaged in them?

Yet of these the mere sensualist has no more conception than he has of those which appertain to religion. And why so? Not because *they* are incapable of affording pleasure, but because *his* mind is sunk to so abject a state, as to be incapable of receiving it. If such, then, and so exquisite, is the gratification which is enjoyed in pursuits like those which I have just mentioned, to what an exalted pitch may it not be supposed to rise, when the objects to which they are directed are in the highest degree important and interesting? But such, unquestionably, those objects are, which habitually occupy the minds of the faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. For they embrace the whole system of the economy of grace, devised by the wisdom and mercy of the Most High, for the accomplishment of the great work of man's salvation. Can any thing else be possibly conceived, to involve a degree of importance and of interest to be compared with this? Certainly not. And if men of learning are frequently strangers to the delights which the cultivation of Christianity affords, it is for a reason similar to that for which the votaries of sensuality are unacquainted with the refined pleasures which the learned derive from their intellectual pursuits. It is because their minds are so completely engrossed by subjects of inferior moment, as to be regardless of that which is of the highest consequence. But, could they only be prevailed upon to devote themselves to it with the same assiduity with which they are wont

to cultivate the arts and sciences,—would they endeavour to be penetrated with a deep sense of its awful truths,—would they strive to acquire a relish for its holy exercises,—and apply for assistance, to that Great Being, who has their minds and hearts at his disposal, and who is both able and willing to aid them in their undertakings,—they would find their exertions abundantly repaid by satisfactions and delights incomparably superior to the most exquisite pleasures which they experience in the cultivation of the arts and sciences, and which, instead of being confined, like the latter, within the limited boundaries of their earthly existence, would accompany them, moreover, into the regions of immortality, where, exalted and improved by additional enjoyments, they would constitute their happiness throughout eternity.

And as that joy of heart which our blessed Saviour promised to his Apostles, is the constant portion of his faithful adherents, so it is also a joy which no man can take from them. Yes, my friends, it is a joy which attends them in every stage and condition of life, and which, it is not in the power of circumstances or events to interrupt or disturb. For it is the peculiar privilege of the religion of Jesus Christ to diffuse universally, and at all times, over the souls of those who are devoted to it, in prosperity as well as in adversity, its exhilarating influence. The cause which, perhaps, beyond every other is destructive



in general of human comfort, is that tumult of soul which is produced by the unrestrained licentiousness of the passions, But nothing of that sort is experienced by the good and pious Christian. The faculties of his mind, and the affections of his heart, are all subjected to the salutary discipline of the law of God, and throughout his whole interior prevails a placid calm. Hence the truth of the Psalmist's exclamation, "there is much peace to those who love thy law, O Lord." The satisfaction resulting from the fruition of earthly possessions, distinctions, and enjoyments, which is apt to be so much embittered by that anxiety and remorse which haunt the minds of worldlings, by the true Christian is enjoyed in peace and comfort, sanctified by religion, and heightened by the pleasure of the devout affections. Whatever he has, he acknowledges to have received from the Father of all good gifts, and at his command he is willing again to resign it. He possesses, therefore, the advantages of prosperity without its troubles. He avails himself of the comforts of the present hour with temperance and gratitude, without any solicitude concerning future events. And should any unforeseen accident, in the general instability of human affairs, reduce him to a state of poverty or disgrace, he bends with humility under the powerful hand which lies heavy upon him; he remembers with consolation the soothing declaration of the sacred oracles, that "whom the Lord loveth, he chastiseth;" and

exclaiming with holy Job, "the Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord," he profits of the transient evils of life to his eternal interest. As he looks not to the world for the reward of his merit, so neither is he disappointed if he experience its neglect. The injustice of men is productive of this advantage to him. It brings to his mind the incorruptible equity of the master whom he serves, whose judgments are righteous, who distributes his favors with a bounteous, yet impartial hand, who rewards intentions as well as actions, and to the view of whose all-searching eye, even the failing endeavour of the upright heart shines with the effulgence of the most brilliant success. As he does not court the smile of human applause, so neither is he affected by the sneer of human contempt. Regardless of the clamours which may be raised against him by the enemies of truth and virtue, he is satisfied with the testimony of conscious rectitude. The grand object of his ambition is to obtain the approbation of him to whom all his actions are directed, and from whom alone he expects his reward. He well knows, that the praise of men is a very equivocal mark of merit, dangerous to virtue, and not unfrequently the recompense of vice. His aim is not to *acquire* reputation, but to *deserve* it. He wishes not to dazzle with his splendour, but to edify by his example. Besides, my friends, the influence of religion on the human heart, is such, that even the world itself, profuse

as it is in the distribution of its censures on those who are devoted to it, is stricken with awe at the venerable dignity which characterizes those who are superior to its attacks.

Nor is the faithful disciple of Jesus Christ unprovided with comfort when other calamities befall him, to which, in common with all his companions in tribulation and mortality, he is alike exposed. If a tedious or painful illness deprive him of the blessing of health, he does not abandon himself to useless vexation, to fretful complaints and murmurings, which would only tend to aggravate his sufferings; but possessing his soul in patience, and resigned to the heavenly will of him who frequently subjects the constancy of his chosen servants to the trial of severe afflictions, he ever preserves that equability of mind, that serenity and composure, which have an admirable tendency to smooth at once the bed of sickness, and to promote the restoration of health. He knows it to be his lot to suffer. And since he *must* suffer, by offering up his sufferings on the altar of his heart in union with those of his Divine Redeemer, as a propitiatory sacrifice for past failings, he converts them at least to the most profitable use.

Nor let it be imagined, that when his infirmities or the decay of nature admonish him of the period of his approaching dissolution, his day of mourning and affliction is then at length arrived. Oh! no, my friends. To the wicked indeed, it is



truly an evil day. But not so to the faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Why, in reality should he repine? Why should he be disquieted? What, in the name of God, has he to apprehend? Fancy not that the prospect of his approaching separation from the world is to *him* a cause of trouble or uneasiness. He never permitted his heart to cleave with undue attachment to an object so unsatisfactory and fugacious. He has never been in the habit of viewing the earth in any other light than as a temporary habitation, a strange land, the place of his exile. He has ever been accustomed to consider his true country as situated beyond the confines of the grave. To that country it has long been his delight to look forward, and to hail it, like the patriarch of old, with distant salutations. He rejoices therefore, to behold the period at hand which is to terminate at length his sequestration from it: And, having hitherto lived by faith, he expires in tranquillity.

Wherefore, my friends, since it clearly appears, that religion is such a source of comfort and satisfaction, let us cherish and cultivate it with unremitting assiduity. Thus shall we experience a joy of heart similar to that, which our blessed Saviour promised to his apostles, as recorded in this day's gospel, and which it will not be in the power of man to take away. And thus, even in this life, shall we anticipate in some measure that celestial felicity, which, in the life that is to come, we shall enjoy in all its plenitude.

## SERMON XXI.

### THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

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#### THE INFLUENCE OF THE DIVINE SPIRIT ON THE HEARTS OF MEN.

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GOSPEL. *St. John*, xvi. v. 5-14. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples, I go to him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart. But I tell you the truth : it is expedient to you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you; and when he is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believed not in me; and of justice, because I go to the Father, and you shall see me no longer; and of judgment, because the prince of this world is already judged. I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now; but when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will teach you all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but what things soever he shall hear, he shall speak, and the things that are to come he shall shew you. He shall glorify me, because he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it to you.

THE apostles having been informed by our blessed Saviour of his approaching departure from them, and of the sufferings and afflictions which, after that period, they were doomed to undergo, were overwhelmed with grief. They considered themselves as sheep in the midst of wolves, about to be deprived of the presence of their shepherd, on whom they relied for protection and defence. Jesus, therefore, in order to comfort them under

the dejected state of mind to which he perceived them reduced, awakened their attention to the consideration of the place to which he was going, which, he observed with some appearance of surprise, was not to any of them a subject of enquiry. That place, however, he assured them, was no other than the blessed mansion of his heavenly Father. "And now, said he, I go to him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, whither goest thou? But because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your hearts." And to reconcile them more effectually to his separation from them, he stated to them the expediency of that measure, by telling them, that it was to be regarded as an indispensable preliminary to the descent of the Holy Spirit, which was essential to the promotion of the interests of that religion which he came upon the earth to establish, as well as of their own individual interests. "But I tell you the truth: it is expedient to you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." The influence of the Holy Spirit in promoting the interests of his divine religion, is implied in the subsequent passage:—"And when he is come, he will convince the world of sin, of justice, and of judgment." The meaning of which I apprehend to be, that the spirit of God, by the miraculous powers which he would confer on the apostles, would, in the first place, add such a blaze of evidence to the truth of Christianity, as to leave no doubt whatsoever



of the criminality of its opponents, who obstinately refused to embrace it ; “ of sin because they believed not in me.” Secondly, that he would justify the character assumed by its Divine Author, by attesting in the same supernatural manner, his alleged ascent to his Eternal Father, which would never have taken place, had he not been in reality, what he pretended to be, the only begotten Son of the Father ; “ and of justice, because I go to the Father, and you shall see me no longer.” And finally, that the same Holy Spirit would manifest also the iniquity of the sentence which the enemies of Jesus had pronounced against him, by exhibiting to them, in the testimony he would bear to the event of his resurrection, the condemnation of the devil, the prince of the world, by whose instigation, he would clearly shew that his unjust judges had been impelled to the perpetration of that flagitious act ; “ and of judgment, because the prince of this world is already judged.” Such, my friends, is the best explication I am able to give of a passage which is universally acknowledged by commentators on the sacred scriptures to be difficult to be understood. Having thus specified to his Apostles, the benefits which would accrue to the cause of his holy religion from the descent of the Spirit of God, he proceeded to discover to them the signal advantages which they themselves would individually derive from that extraordinary event. With this view, he first observed that there were many truths with which it was of im-

portance that they should be acquainted, but which he had been deterred from communicating to them by the weakness of their minds, which were not yet in a condition to receive them ; “ I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now, but when, he added, the spirit of truth shall come, he will teach you all truth. For he shall not speak of himself ; but what things soever he shall hear, he shall speak : and the things that are to come, he shall shew you.” By these words, he clearly intimated that the Holy Spirit, having by his descent upon them, invigorated their souls, and thus qualified them for the reception of those truths which he himself had hitherto withholden from them, would instruct them fully in the whole system of the divine economy, and would reveal to them, moreover, the events of futurity. For their consolation he subjoined, that the communications which would be made to them, would redound also to the glory of him whom they loved and venerated, since they would display, in the clearest light, all the wonders of his power, wisdom, and goodness, and of every other attribute which so eminently distinguished his character. “ He shall glorify me, because he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it to you.”

As our blessed Saviour, when he beheld his apostles oppressed with sorrow, directed their attention to that peculiar dwelling of his heavenly Father in which he rewards the fidelity of his faithful servants, and to which he was about to

take his departure, so does it become those who profess themselves his disciples, whenever they labor under afflictions and troubles of any description, to raise in like manner, their thoughts to the same blissful seat, of which, by faith, they are indubitably assured that he is actually in possession. Lift up then your minds and hearts to heaven, O ye children of sorrow, who labor, and are heavy laden. "Lift up," as St. Paul admonishes, "the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." "Look (stedfastly)," as the same Apostle exhorts, "on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who, having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and sitteth at the right hand of the throne of God." Contemplate him, there surrounded with ineffable glory and happiness. Hear him encouraging you from his celestial abode, in a language similar to that in which he addressed his afflicted disciples. "Let not your hearts be troubled. In my Father's house, there are many mansions. I have here prepared a place for you. And I will come again, and I will take you to myself, that where I am, you also may be." Such, my friends, are the consoling terms, in which Jesus, the compassionate Jesus, may well be conceived to address every child of sorrow; and every child of sorrow, who listens attentively to the voice of that divine comforter, speaking to him to this effect in the sacred Scriptures, will not fail to derive from it unspeakable consolation. Nor is this all. Besides the prospect of those ever-



lasting joys reserved for us hereafter, to which Christ directed the minds of his apostles, we have the satisfaction also of knowing, that that same Paraclete, that advocate and comforter, whom he promised to send *them*, abides also with *us*, and that he is ready to administer to us his assistance and relief, in whatever hardships, afflictions, or troubles, it may be our lot to be involved.

As it was not, however, merely for their support and consolation amidst the transient distresses of their earthly pilgrimage, that the Holy Spirit was sent down upon the apostles, but with a view to higher and more important interests, so the same may be said of his abiding presence in the Church of God. For the effects, which Christ promised to his apostles, should be the result of the descent of the Holy Spirit, both upon the world and upon themselves, may also be ascribed to the powerful influence of his continued residence amongst us, on two corresponding descriptions of persons. On sinners, I mean, in the first place, who, from their habitual violation of the laws of the Gospel, may be compared to the world; and, in the next place, on those professed observers of its sacred injunctions, who, on account of their inadequate notions of its requisitions, may be assimilated to the apostles before the descent of the Holy Spirit upon *them*. The former of these two classes, the Holy Ghost convinces, by the operations of his grace, of sin, of justice, and of judgment; and the minds of the latter, he illuminates and invigorates. Yes, my

friends, as heretofore, that Holy Spirit convicted the unbelieving Jews of the sin of their incredulity, in rejecting the doctrines of Jesus Christ, "of sin, because they believed not in me;" so does he excite in the breasts of sinners, a feeling conviction of the inexcusable guilt of their practical infidelity, in violating the precepts of his holy law. How, in reality, in the first instance, did the Spirit of God convince the Jews of the sin of their incredulity? Was it not by shewing, through the miraculous powers imparted to the Apostles, that all their false notions they entertained of the Messiah, which prevented them from acknowledging Jesus for that august personage, were groundless and inadmissible? In a similar manner does he, by the operations of his grace, convince sinners of the criminality of their conduct, in neglecting the observance of his divine ordinances. For no sooner is the light of the Holy Spirit diffused over their minds, than they immediately discover the frivolousness of all those various pretexts, by which they attempt to excuse the irregularity of their lives. They then see, that all those alleged pleas of human infirmity, of the violence of the passions, of the allurements of the world, and of earthly cares, in which they may be engaged, are undeserving of attention. They consider them as condemnations of their own remissness, in not applying for the succours necessary to supply the deficiency of their natural strength, of their inattention to the exercise of a just control over the affections of their

hearts, of their temerity in exposing themselves to the dangers of seduction, of their undue solicitude concerning earthly things, but by no means as justifications of their disorders, the blame of which they now feel compelled to appropriate to themselves. They are now persuaded, by the suggestions of the Holy Spirit, that the consciousness of their weakness should have induced them to sue for succour to the throne of the Most High, to which, they are assured, that, if they repair with confidence, they "will obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid," (HEB. c. iv. v. 16;) and their neglect of prayer implies, they well know, a culpable omission of that salutary measure, and therefore renders them responsible for the consequences of it. They are now made sensible, that if their corrupt propensities are naturally strong, they should, for that reason, have watched them with the most jealous circumspection, and have had recourse to mortification and self-denial, to keep them under restraint. But to those expedients, which it was particularly incumbent upon them to employ, they can not dissemble that they have been utterly inattentive. They now perceive that their sense of the power, which the attractions of the world have over their weak minds, should have urged them to use every possible precaution to guard themselves against them, that it should have prevented them from exposing themselves, with heedless temerity, to their dangerous seductions, and that it should have caused them to betake themselves to recol-



lection and prayer, in order to counteract their baneful influence. Instead of which, they are aware, that they have laid themselves open to their captivating charms, that scenes of gaiety, of pleasure, and amusement, have been the constant objects of their pursuits, that exercises of piety, and communion with their own hearts, have never entered into their plans of life, and that having themselves thus sought the danger, which they are so fond of magnifying, as an apology for their excesses, they are not to be surprised, if, as they are admonished by the sacred oracles, they perish in it. And as to the pressure of worldly occupations, which they sometimes hold forth, as a plea for the neglect of religious duties, they now view it in no other light, than as an aggravation of their guilt; since they regard it as an argument of that extravagant anxiety about worldly things, and of that want of confidence in the providence of God, which are in themselves sinful. Thus does the Holy Spirit, like a powerful advocate, pleading the cause of their eternal interests against that of their inordinate self-love, convict them of sin, at the bar of their own consciences, and prompt them, by his suggestions, to pronounce judgment against themselves, that, in the language of the Apostle, "they may not (hereafter at a higher tribunal) be condemned with this world." (1 COR. c. xi. v. 32.)

Not only does the Holy Spirit convince sinners of their guilt in the way which I have described, but he also convinces them of justice. For as

according to the exposition which I have given of the Gospel, he justified to the Jews the character of our blessed Saviour, by bearing testimony to his ascent to his heavenly Father ; “ of justice, because I go to the Father, and you shall see me no longer,” so does he justify to sinners whom he has convicted of guilt, the characters of his faithful disciples, whom hitherto they have been accustomed to look down upon with contempt. For their views, their sentiments, their inclinations having experienced from the operation of the Holy Spirit, a complete revolution, they are now induced to form a different estimation of men and things. The persons who before attracted their notice, and commanded their respect, were those who are eminent for those advantages which the world is wont to value and esteem. They were the great, the opulent, the wise, the learned, on whom it usually bestows its admiration and applause. But as for the meek, humble, unostentatious, and retired servant of God, who “ lives by faith,” and “ endeavours by good works to make his calling and election sure ;” him, they did not consider as an object worthy of their attention ; or, if they did, it was only to make him a subject of their sneers and ridicule. But now that the Holy Spirit has operated, by his divine influence, a change in their souls, now that, by his grace, he has enlightened their understandings, and touched their hearts, they contemplate the same individual in a very different point of view. They regard

him as a person incomparably more deserving of their veneration and esteem, than those on whom before those tributes were bestowed. They regard him as one, who, by the habitual elevation of his mind to heaven, may be said, like his Divine Master, to have ascended to the Father; as one, whose virtues confer upon him more real nobility, than all the titles and distinctions of the most honored among the children of men; as one, who possesses in the hidden treasures of celestial grace, which he bears within him, a fund of riches incalculably more valuable than the wealth of the most affluent; as one, who although, perhaps, he may not be deeply versed in any of the various branches of human learning, has a large share of that wisdom which is from above, compared with which, all human learning is entitled to no better appellation than that of folly, for even "the foolishness of God is wiser than man," says the Apostle, (1 Cor. c. i. v. 25,) as one, who, by the influence of his piety and goodness, may contribute, perhaps, more effectually to avert the effects of the divine anger from guilty nations, than all the sagacity of the most enlightened statesmen, and all the ability and valor of fleets and armies; as one, whose soul is a sanctuary of the Divinity, and whose name is recorded in the book of life; as one, on whom angels gaze with admiration, and on whom God himself smiles with complacency; finally, as one who is to be destined hereafter the associate of blessed spirits in the kingdom of heaven. Such, my



friends, is the just and proper estimation, which sinners, reclaimed from their evil ways by the suggestions of the Holy Spirit, form of the faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, and thus “are they convinced of justice,” as well as of sin.

Nor does the same divine Spirit fail, moreover, to convince them of judgment. For as, conformably to the explication which I have laid before you, of the passage at present under consideration, he convinced the Jews of judgment, by evincing the injustice of the sentence which they had passed on the Saviour of mankind, as suggested to them by the principle of evil whose condemnation he manifested in the verdict pronounced against him by the resurrection of Jesus; “of judgment, because the prince of this world is already judged,” so by the operations of his grace, does he also convince sinners, whom he has induced to relinquish their criminal habits, and to walk in newness of life, of the want of equity which characterized the aspersions they had been accustomed to cast on the conduct and intentions of his virtuous followers. For when they beheld a man distinguished for his assiduity in the performance of his religious duties, assisting with devotion, not only when commanded by the Church, but at other times, when opportunities offered, at the sacrifice of the altar, and presenting himself frequently at the table of the Lord to nourish his soul with the bread of life, they ascribed to him an affectation of superior sanctity; when they saw him, though

in possession of all the means which might have fully enabled him to make a figure in the world, and to indulge freely in every species of pleasure and dissipation, yet cautiously avoiding parade and ostentation, declining to run the giddy round of fashionable amusements, which is usual in persons of his rank and fortune, and remarkable for the modest simplicity of his demeanour, they denominated him an unsocial and churlish being, who did not deserve to possess the good things of this world, which he had not the sense or spirit to make use of; and when occasionally they perceived him partaking with cheerfulness of the enjoyments of conviviality or other innocent recreations and entertainments, oh ! then, they observed, that the mask had fallen off, that his real character now appeared, that it was evident he was as fond of dissipation as other people, and that all his pretensions to piety and abstemiousness were hypocrisy and grimace ; imitating thus the example of the Jews, on whom our blessed Saviour made the following observations :—" For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say he hath a devil, the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, behold a man that is a glutton and a wine drinker, a friend of publicans and sinners." " But being renewed by the Holy Ghost in the spirit of their minds, having put off, according to the former conversation, the old man, who is corrupted according to the desires of error, and put on the new man, who, according to God, is created in justice

and holiness of truth," (EPH. c. iv. v. 22-24) they candidly acknowledge the injustice of their past censures, they confess them to have proceeded from a disposition to dim the lustre of virtues so offensive to their distempered sight, and to deny the reality of them as a condemnation of their own vices, whilst, at the same time, they honestly allow, that all those base and unworthy motives to which they before so illiberally imputed them, had no other foundation whatsoever than the corruption of their own hearts. Thus does the Holy Spirit, by his divine influence on the souls of sinners, "convince them of sin, of justice, and of judgment."

I am now to make it appear in what manner he will produce on the minds of Christians whose conceptions of religion are contracted and defective, effects similar to those which Christ promised to his apostles, that they should experience from his descent upon them, when he said, "but when he the Spirit of truth is come, he shall teach you all truth." Like the apostles, who, as it appears from the gospel of this Sunday, were but imperfectly acquainted with the comprehensive system of the Christian dispensation before the descent of the Holy Spirit, many among those who profess themselves disciples of the same divine Master, and who undertake to observe his precepts, have very confined notions of the Christian economy, and consequently, their influence upon their minds and conduct, will be proportionally



limited. They are apt to consider the sphere of their religious duties, and that of their earthly concerns, as two departments essentially distinct and unconnected with each other. The former they regard as a holy land, sanctified and consecrated to the service of the Almighty. The latter they look upon as an allotment assigned to themselves for their own use and benefit, on condition they pay the Great Landlord of whom they hold it, their periodical tributes of homage; and provided they do not violate the restrictions which he has specifically established. If, therefore, they be punctual in the due performance of their devotional exercises at the beginning and the close of each succeeding day; if, on that which is in an especial manner devoted to the Lord, they be careful to comply with the obligations which are attached to it, and adhere strictly to the terms of limitation which he has expressly prescribed, they conceive themselves to be in other respects at full liberty to give the whole of their attention to the prosecution of their worldly interests of aggrandizement, or of pleasure, without any reference whatsoever to any ulterior object. But when the Spirit of God diffuses over their minds his celestial illumination, their views are rendered at once more enlarged and correct. The wall of separation which their deluded imaginations had fondly erected between the hallowed territory of the living God, and that exclusively appropriated to themselves, like the baseless fabric of a vision, vanishes into

air ; and in whatever direction they cast their eyes, they behold no other domain than that of the Most High. Whatever may be their rank and condition in life, in whatever occupations or pursuits they may be engaged, they consider themselves invariably as his servants, and as such, they labor with incessant industry to discharge with fidelity the duties of their stations. Their religion is no longer made to consist in occasional tributes of religious homage, but in that habitual temper and disposition of mind, which prompts to deeds of universal goodness ; to fervor in their devotions, government of their passions, to a meek, compassionate, and benevolent conduct towards their fellow creatures, and diligence in complying with the various obligations of their respective callings. It urges them, in short, to fashion their wills in all things to a perfect conformity with that of their Father who is in heaven ; to make the promotion of his glory the principal object of their occupations and pursuits ; and to consecrate to him their whole being without restriction or reserve. Such, my friends, are the effects suggested by the Gospel of this Sunday, which are produced by the Spirit of God, both on the souls of sinners, and on the partial observers of the religion of Jesus Christ. Do you, my friends, apply with fervor to that same divine Spirit for his celestial aid ? Entreat him to accommodate his multiform influence to the various demands of your respective exigencies ; to enlighten your understandings, to inflame your

hearts, to remove your prejudices, to subdue your passions, to soften your tempers, to invigorate your resolutions, and to establish, in short, within you, that heavenly frame of mind, which may qualify you for the society of the blessed inhabitants of God's everlasting kingdom.



## SERMON XXII.

### THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

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#### ON THE DUTY OF PRAYER.

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GOSPEL. *St. John*, xvi. v. 23-30. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples, Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked any thing in my name: ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things I have spoken to you in proverbs: the hour cometh when I will no more speak to you in proverbs, but will shew you plainly of the Father. In that day you shall ask in my name; and I say not to you, that I will ask the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples say to him, Behold now thou speakest plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now we know that thou knowest all things, and thou needest not that any man should ask thee. By this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

It was related in the Gospel of the Sunday before last, that when Jesus perceived a secret disposition prevailing among his Apostles, to request an explanation of the language in which he had spoken of his approaching departure, he did not wait for their specific application to him for that purpose, but, that having stated to them the subject of their perplexity, to shew that he was not ignorant of their most secret thoughts, he proceeded to inform them, in the first place, of the troubles in which they were about to be involved, and in the next, of the

unalterable joys by which those troubles would shortly be succeeded. The greatest part of the Gospel of this Sunday, is a continuation of that reply, which was certainly well calculated to give additional comfort to their distressed minds. For it announced to them, the powerful efficacy of his mediation in their behalf, and the important benefits they might expect to derive from it. It assured them, that thenceforth the choicest blessings of Heaven should be imparted to them, if they would only sue for them in his name. "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it you." This mode of presenting their petitions to the throne of the Most High, was indeed, he observed, perfectly new to them: and no wonder; since they had not hitherto been instructed to resort to it. But he prescribed it to them now, as a sure means of procuring the highest degree of happiness which, in their probationary state of existence, they were capable of enjoying. "Hitherto you have not asked any thing in my name: ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." The intelligence however which he had been delivering to them, he acknowledged to have been conveyed in terms which might justly be deemed mysterious and enigmatical. But alluding to the descent of the Holy Spirit, he added, that the period was not far distant, when no obscurity whatsoever would attend the communications which should be made to them respecting divine truths; but that these truths should be perfectly

clear and intelligible to their understandings. "These things I have spoken to you in proverbs. The hour cometh when I will no more speak to you in proverbs, but will shew you plainly of the Father." And when, by the operations of the Holy Spirit upon their minds, the counsels of his heavenly Father should be clearly disclosed to them, then, he told them, that convinced of the powerful efficacy of his mediatorial influence, they would not hesitate to avail themselves of it in their supplications to Heaven. "In that day you shall ask in my name." He intimated to them, moreover, that, to say nothing of the interest which he on his part would exercise with his Father in their behalf, such was the love which the Father himself bore them, in consideration of the affection which they cherished for *him* his beloved son, and of their faith in him as a delegate from God, that, for his sake, the petitions preferred to the Father, in his name, would be favorably received, and graciously complied with. "And I say not to you, that I will ask the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." So dull, however, were the understandings of the apostles at this time, that they seem not to have comprehended who that being was, to whom their divine Master gave the appellation of Father. Jesus, therefore, in order to put an end to their perplexity on this subject, gave them to understand, that that being was God. For as it appears



from the text which I have just cited, that they believed him to have come out from God, so he now informed them that he came forth from the Father ; whence it was obvious to conclude, that God was that being whom he denominated his Father ; and that as God, therefore, was that Father from whom he came, so God was also that same Father to whom he was about to return. “ I come forth from the Father, and am come into the world ; again I leave the world, and I go to the Father.” Satisfied with a declaration so clear and explicit on the part of their divine Master, the apostles at length acknowledged that they perfectly understood him, and such they avowed to be their conviction of his boundless knowledge, and of his intimate acquaintance with the most hidden secrets of the human heart, that they had no hesitation, they said, whatsoever, in professing their firm and immoveable belief in the divinity of his mission. “ His disciples say to him, behold now thou talkest plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now we know that thou knowest all things, and thou needest not that any man should tell thee. By this we believe that thou camest forth from God.”

From that part of the discourse which our blessed Saviour delivered to his apostles after his last supper, and which is contained in this day's Gospel, three points of consideration obviously present themselves. The first, is the great importance of that solemn act of religious worship, which is denominated prayer. The second is the

necessity, in the performance of it, of having recourse to the mediation of Christ : and the third is the happy and beneficial result, which, when accompanied with that condition, may be expected to arise from it. “ Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it you.” Prayer is an elevation of the mind and heart to God. Its appropriate acts are adoration, thanksgiving, and supplication. By adoration is to be understood, that profound prostration of soul, with which we offer him our supreme homage as to the one only eternal, self-existing and perfect being, from whom every other derives its existence, as from the Omnipotent Creator, Preserver, and Governor, of universal nature. By thanksgiving is meant, that heartfelt expression of gratitude, which the consideration of the great and innumerable blessings, for which we are indebted to him, has a tendency to excite. And by supplication, are implied all those various entreaties for assistance, relief, and pardon, at the throne of mercy, which the conviction of our own weakness, the knowledge we have of the dangerous difficulties and troubles, corporal and spiritual, to which we are exposed, and the consciousness of guilt, imperiously demand. It can not, surely, be deemed necessary to employ any weight of argument to convince you of the importance of exercises like these, or to enforce upon your minds your obligations to perform them. You have only to listen to the plainest dictates of

unbiassed reason to be persuaded of the right of nature's great Lord to the universal homage of his dependent vassals, who derive from him their existence, preservation, and support. You have only to yield to the spontaneous impulse of your in-bred feelings, to be satisfied of the demands which the most disinterested and munificent of benefactors unquestionably has on the grateful acknowledgments of those, on whom he has conferred the choicest blessings; and the sole consideration of your individual interests must be sufficient to convince you of the earnestness and assiduity with which it becomes weak and indigent creatures to have recourse for assistance to that Supreme Being, whose power enables him, whose wisdom directs him, and whose goodness disposes him, to grant to the petitions of his suppliant votaries, every necessary succour which the exigencies of their conditions may require. And yet, my friends, how deplorably great is the number of those who profess themselves Christians, that is to say, who profess themselves adorers of the living God in spirit and in truth, by whom these momentous and interesting duties are either entirely neglected, or discharged at least in a manner which is almost tantamount to an omission of them! How many are there who allow days, weeks, months, and even years, perhaps, to roll away, without devoting any portion of them to the worship due to that Sovereign Lord, "in whom they live, move, and have their being"!



When, in the morning, they rise from their beds, refreshed and invigorated by comfortable repose, no expressions of gratitude testify their sense of the affectionate tenderness of that kind Parent, who rocked them as it were to sleep, and who watched attentively over them during the midnight hour ; no supplications for his protection and succour amidst the dangers and difficulties which they may have to encounter, attest their confidence in his providential care ; but rushing precipitately into the concerns of earth, without giving a single thought to heaven, they direct to the former the whole of their attention, and retire at night to rest with as much neglect of the Supreme Ruler and Disposer of all things, as if he took no part whatsoever in the affairs of men. Are we to be surprised, if persons, who thus pass their days in a total forgetfulness of the important duty of prayer, are permitted to experience the consequences of it ? Are we to be surprised, if thus turning their backs upon God, God as it were, in return, turn his back upon them, and abandon them without assistance to their own weakness ? Are we to be surprised, if thus abandoned, they become the sport of every contingency, and the prey of every enemy by whom they may be assailed ? Are we to be surprised, in short, at seeing them overwhelmed with affliction, transported with passion, or debased by the excesses of sensual gratification ? Certainly not. Others, moreover, there are, who, although perhaps they may

be punctual in the daily performance of their devotional exercises, yet are lamentably deficient in their manner of performing them. What languor, what indifference, what lassitude, is too frequently apt to attend them ! What distractions are suffered to break in upon their unguarded minds, and to interrupt without resistance their intercourse with heaven ! With what indecent precipitation do they not oftentimes carry it on ! How anxious are they to bring it to a termination ! And when their task (for so by their conduct they seem to consider it), and when their task is at an end, how striking is the contrast of the eagerness with which they return to their earthly occupations ! Think not, my friends, that by throwing yourselves upon your knees, by raising your eyes and hands aloft, by striking your breasts, by reciting with your tongues certain forms contained in your prayer-books, or by any other external marks of devotion, you discharge your duty of piety to God. For if the attention of your minds, and the feelings of your hearts, do not accompany your words and actions, they are ineffectual and vain as the sounding brass, or the tinkling cymbal. And the words of Isaiah, employed by our blessed Saviour in speaking of the Jews, may with equal propriety be applied to you :—" This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Is it not universally admitted among men, that to betray symptoms of irksomeness and of absence of mind in the company even of persons of our own

rank, is a mark of rudeness? Are not such symptoms, when manifested in the presence of exalted dignitaries, usually regarded as indications of disrespect? And should they take place at a time, when petitions are presented to such personages for their protection and favor, would they not be considered as outrageous insults? This then being the case, what are we to think of that coldness and inattention discovered by weak and indigent creatures in their awful converse with their Great Creator, and discovered to him in the very addresses which they prefer to him, on subjects in which they themselves are most deeply interested? Surely such conduct, instead of rendering him propitious to their requests, is calculated rather to provoke his indignation. That your tributes therefore of religious homage may be acceptable to God, that your supplications to him may be the effectual means of causing his choicest blessings to descend upon you, attend to the important admonition of holy writ. "Before prayer, prepare thy soul, and be not as a man who tempteth God." Let your minds be penetrated with a profound sense of the transcendent excellence of that Divine Being, who is the object of your religious homage, of the relations which you bear towards him, and of the interests involved in the success of your petitions. Remember then, that the object of your religious homage, is at once the greatest and the best of beings; that if he fills heaven and earth with the majesty of his glory, "he openeth also



his hand, and filleth with his blessings every living creature;" that if he is the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, he authorizes you also to look up to him as your Father who is in heaven; and that, though between the immensity of *his* grandeur and the contracted span of your own littleness, the disproportion is infinite, yet he has condescended to raise you to the exalted dignity of his adopted children. Remember, moreover, my friends, that the success of your petitions implies the attainment of whatever advantages and comforts it may be expedient to you to enjoy at present, and of all the means of acquiring hereafter an eternity of bliss. Surely it will not be denied, that these awful and interesting considerations are sufficient to operate so powerfully upon the mind, as to prevent it from giving admission to any other thought, which might contribute in any manner to draw off its attention from objects of such incomparably superior moment.

But in order to render your acts of religious worship pleasing to that great and omnipotent Being to whom they are directed, and to secure to your petitions a favourable result, you must be careful not to lose sight of that most essential requisite, which should never fail to be their inseparable attendant. Now, what is that? Why, as I have already informed you, it is the mediation of Jesus Christ. "For there is one God," says the Apostle, "and one mediator between God and man,

the man Jesus Christ." (1 TIM. c. ii. v. 5.) And the promise, made by our blessed Saviour in the Gospel, of a successful issue to supplications presented to the throne of the Most High, is also restricted to the same condition. "If you ask the Father any thing *in my name*, he will give it you." Yes, my friends, it is through him alone, it is through the intervention alone of that beloved Son in whom he is well pleased, that your acts of religious homage will find acceptance with the Father, or that he will be prevailed upon to lend a propitious ear to your most earnest entreaties. As to any thing of your own, which you have it in your power to offer him, there is nothing in the whole stock of your natural possessions, which is not beneath his attention, nothing that is not in some degree impure and defiled, nothing that is not more or less offensive, instead of being grateful to the eye of his sanctity. It is the lamb without spot, the lamb that taketh away the sins of the world, that is your only resource in your attempts to make an acceptable oblation to the throne of the Most High, or to procure a favorable reception to your petitions. It is in the infinite merits alone of that adorable victim, that you are furnished with means of glorifying God, and of drawing down upon yourselves the effects of his bounty; and it is on a firm confidence in the powerful efficacy of those infinite merits, accompanied with a disavowal of all trust in your own righteousness,

and an unfeigned acknowledgment of your own unworthiness, that your addresses to heaven should be invariably founded.

Our blessed Saviour assured his Apostles, that if they complied with this condition, they should not fail to obtain the object of their request. "If you ask the Father any thing in my name, he *will give* it you." Yet, you are not hence to conclude, my friends, that every earthly advantage which we may wish to enjoy, will be immediately granted, on our application for it. It is not to be supposed, for instance, that the poor will become rich, that the infirm will be restored to health, or that they who are young, will live to be old, because they send up their petitions to heaven, in the name of Christ, for those specific purposes. No, my friends, such were not the things which our Blessed Saviour had in view, when he assured his Apostles, that "whatever they should ask the Father in his name," should be conceded to them. They were matters of a higher and more valuable description. They were such things only, as he well knew, that, when their minds should have been illuminated by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them, they would be disposed to desire. They were that lively faith, that animating hope, that ardour of divine love, that contentedness of mind, that firmness to resist, and strength to overcome, the numerous enemies whom they might have to encounter in their spiritual warfare, that perfect conformity to the will of God, in all the various occurrences of life,



which are the principal objects of the affections of those whose hearts are animated by the Spirit of God. Such were the blessings, for which, as their Divine Master foresaw, the Apostles were induced to pray. Such were the blessings which were actually poured out upon them in copious profusion : and such also are the blessings with which your fervent petitions to Heaven, if preferred in the name of Christ, will, undoubtedly, be rewarded. But as to the transient and perishable things of earth, they are to be regarded as matters of minor consideration, and should never be the subjects of your supplications to the divine goodness, but with this proviso, that the attainment of them be perfectly consistent with your incomparably more important and exalted interests. For alas ! my friends, so contracted are the views of the human mind, that, like improvident children, you might possibly desire to be indulged in gratifications, which, if granted to your requests, would eventually prove injurious to you. You are not therefore to be surprised, if the Almighty, like a wise, though affectionate parent, do not always, on these occasions, accommodate his dispensations to the inclinations of your hearts. Yet, you are not thence to imagine, that he is inattentive to your petitions, or regardless of your interests. For, although he may not yield to the solicitations of *your* ignorance, he will give you what, in *his* wisdom, he shall perceive to be most conducive to your real welfare. He may not, perhaps, in conformity with your

wishes, make any material alteration in the circumstances of your condition, but he will do more, he will provide you with comforts which will cause you to be happy in every condition. He will give you a quiet and contented mind; he will infuse into your souls his heavenly consolations: and he will impart to you an inward satisfaction, delight, and joy, superior far to all the boasted advantages which the world is thought to confer on its most favored votaries.

Such then, my friends, being the great and important benefits derived from prayer, let me entreat you not to be so forgetful of your best and dearest interests, as to neglect that sacred and solemn duty. On the one hand, we cannot be ignorant of our manifold wants; and we are assured, on the other hand, in the Gospel of this day, that we may confidently expect to receive assistance from above, provided we apply for it in a proper frame and disposition of mind, and are careful, at the same time, to have recourse to the powerful and efficacious mediation of the Redeemer of mankind. Let us then, with sentiments of deep humility, of reverential awe, and of filial confidence, prostrate ourselves habitually before our Father, who is in heaven, and entreat him in the name, and for the sake of his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased, to listen with a propitious ear to our earnest supplications. Let us, in conformity with that form of prayer, of which Christ Jesus was himself the author, express to our Father who is in heaven,

our most ardent wish, that he may be universally honored, adored, and loved, throughout the world, and that we ourselves in particular, may contribute, on our parts, to the manifestation of his glory, by the sanctity of our lives. Let us pray, that on earth he will graciously deign to establish in our hearts the kingdom of his grace, that we may be qualified to become hereafter fit associates of the just made perfect, in the kingdom of his glory. Let us beg that his holy will may be the ruling principle of our lives, and that we may studiously endeavour to bring all the faculties of our being under subjection to it. Let us entreat him to grant us a supply of food, which may be necessary for the support of our corporeal frames, but more especially of that supersubstantial bread, as it is termed in the Gospel, of heavenly grace, which may nourish our souls unto everlasting life. Let us request that he will pardon us the transgressions of his divine law, and that he will mercifully condescend to relax in our behalf, the severity of his just judgments. Let us solicit him to guard us against all the machinations of the infernal enemy, the seductions of the world, and the still more dangerous influence of our own corrupt propensities. Finally, let us present to him our most fervent petitions, that being delivered from every evil, which may be hostile either to our present, or to our future welfare, we may, in the language of the Church, so pass through the goods of this life, as not to lose those which are eternal.



## SERMON XXIII.

### THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

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#### ON THE SPIRIT OF CONTROVERSY.

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GOSPEL. *St. John*, xv. v. 26—xvi. v. 4. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples, When the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me; and you shall give testimony, because you are with me from the beginning. These things have I spoken to you, that you may not be scandalized. They will put you out of the synagogues, yea the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth a service to God. And these things will they do to you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things I have told you, that when the hour shall come, you may remember that I told you.

THE Gospel of this Sunday, like those of the three preceding Sundays, is part of a discourse delivered by our blessed Saviour to his apostles, immediately after his last supper. Having animadverted on the enmity which he had experienced from the Jews, he informed them, that when the Holy Spirit, whom he denominated the Paraclete, that is to say, the advocate and comforter, by way of eminence, should come down upon them conformably to his promise, he would vindicate his character from the unjust reproaches which had been cast upon it, by the honorable testimony which he would bear in his behalf. “But when the Para-

plete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the spirit of truth who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me." And here, by the way, it may not be improper to remark, that in the passage which I have just cited, two important points of Catholic doctrine are clearly announced. The first is the personality of the Holy Spirit, and the second is his procession from the Son as well as from the Father; the former of which is denied by the Unitarians, and the latter by the votaries of the Greek Church. For Christ most evidently speaks of him in this place as a distinct person, and of a person too whom he himself would send. Not only did our blessed Saviour acquaint his apostles with the testimony which the Holy Spirit would bear in his regard, as he actually indeed did, when by his descent upon them on the feast of Pentecost, he shed his divine influences over their minds and hearts, and enabled them to perform the most stupendous miracles in support of the pretensions of their divine master, but he told them moreover, that they themselves should bear testimony of him, since by their constant attendance on him during the whole of his ministry, they were peculiarly qualified to be selected for the discharge of that important office. "And you shall give testimony, because you are with me from the beginning." Of the satisfactory manner in which they executed their commission, we actually possess the fullest evidence. For the wonders recorded in the Acts

of the Apostles, of the zeal, firmness, courage, and intrepidity, which they displayed in the vindication of the cause of their divine Master, accompanied with exertions of supernatural power, were sufficient to justify it in the estimation of all whose minds were not obstinately shut against conviction. Alluding to the persecutions, which he told them they would experience from the enemies of the Gospel, he then observed, that he had mentioned these things to them before hand, in order that they might be prepared to expect them; lest coming upon them by surprise, they should prove stumbling blocks, as it were, which might unhappily occasion them to fall from their faith. "These things have I spoken to you, that you may not be scandalized." And that they might be fully apprised of the calamities which awaited them, he added, that they would be expelled from the Synagogues by their enraged countrymen, who regarding them as objects of hatred and execration both to God and man, would, in the transports of their misguided zeal, conscientiously persuade themselves, that they really performed a meritorious act in putting them to death. "They will put you out of the synagogues: yea the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth a service to God." But that the motives of conscience by which these persecutors were actuated, might not be deemed a justification of their atrocious conduct, he proceeded to ascribe it to its genuine



cause, which was their ignorance of the designs of the Father, and of the character of him whom the Father had sent, in which, by their prejudices and neglect of investigation, they had culpably allowed their minds to be involved. "And these things they will do to you, because they have not known the Father nor me." This account of the troubles which would befall them, he, once more repeated, he had communicated to them, that they might not on their arrival, operate to their discouragement, but that being considered as the fulfilment of distinct predictions, they might tend on the contrary, to confirm them in their faith. "But these things I have told you, that when the hour of them cometh, you may remember that I told you."

In the Gospel which I have been expounding to you, we are furnished, in the first place, from the very highest authority, with a melancholy account of the baneful influence of misguided zeal. "Yea, the hour cometh," said our blessed Saviour to his Apostles, "that, whoever killeth you, will think that he doeth service to God." What a picture is this, my friends, of the dreadful effects which a mistaken zeal in the cause of religion is apt to produce! Can any thing be more shocking than a disposition of mind, which not only prompts to the most atrocious deeds, but which sanctifies and consecrates those atrocious deeds in the opinions of those who are the perpetrators of them? Yet, such, it appears from the words of Christ, was the

temper of mind which characterised the Jewish zealots, in their opposition to the ministers of his holy word. They blindly imagined that the slaughter of those, who taught doctrines which did not accord with their own erroneous notions and prejudices on the subject of religion, would be an acceptable sacrifice to the Most High. Such, also, it is to be lamented, have unhappily been the sentiments of too many among the votaries of Christianity, who, at various periods, have resorted to measures of violence and persecution against those, whose religious tenets were different to their own. And, although the influence of this misguided zeal, may have ceased to discover itself in deeds of atrocity, which have been the disgrace of other times, yet, it is much to be lamented, that it still continues to produce effects which are hostile to the peace and comfort of mankind. For, is it not an undeniable fact, that persons the most ardent in their attachment to the doctrines of the particular denomination of Christians to which they belong, are frequently most notorious for the violence of their declamations, and the acrimony of their invectives against all who dissent from them? Do they not oftentimes, asperse and vilify the characters of others in the most scandalous manner? Are they not in the habit of charging such persons with crimes without foundation, of putting the most unfavorable construction on their conduct, and of imputing to them intentions of the very worst description? Have not Catholics

in particular the strongest reasons to complain of this uncandid and illiberal behaviour of their adversaries in their regard? Have they not the mortification to see the ministers of their religion held up to the contempt and execration of their fellow citizens in society, as hypocrites and impostors, and themselves reviled, as the credulous and deluded dupes of an artful and designing priesthood? Surely, if a tree is to be known from its fruits, we can have no hesitation in pronouncing a principle so fruitful in discord, animosities, and contentions, to be of a most malignant nature. And how happens it, that a temper of mind so repugnant to the spirit and dictates of Christianity, is found to prevail in the breasts of those who are supposed to be most alive to its sacred influence? Why, my friends, it is to be accounted for precisely on the same ground as that, to which our blessed Saviour attributed the rage of the Jewish zealots against his own Apostles. "And these things," said he to them, "they will do to you, because they have not known the Father, nor me." Here, my friends, is disclosed to us the real source of that misguided zeal, which urges those who are actuated by it to such unwarrantable excesses. For, as we learn from Christ himself, that the bigotted fury of the Jews against his own Apostles, originated in ignorance both of the designs of the Father, in sending his only begotten Son into the world, and of the character of his beloved Son whom he had sent, so that misguided zeal which



is observed to animate the breasts of those who profess themselves Christians, proceeds in reality from the same cause. Yes, it proceeds from ignorance of the spirit and precepts of the Christian dispensation, in which the designs of the Father, and the true character of his only-begotten Son, their teacher, and their model, are so conspicuously displayed. The spirit of Christianity is a spirit of charity. Its precepts inculcate the assiduous exercise of every mild, compassionate, and benevolent virtue, by which the peace, harmony, and comfort of mankind are effectually promoted. And the same amiable and endearing virtues were invariably exemplified in the greatest perfection in the conduct of its divine founder. It is impossible to peruse the books of the New Testament, without perceiving that they breathe throughout a love for our fellow-creatures the most disinterested and expansive. Innumerable are the passages in those inspired writings, in which meekness, benignity, forbearance, mercy, and every other pacific and harmonizing quality, are enjoined and recommended with the greatest earnestness : and if we trace the footsteps of our blessed Redeemer through the whole course of his ministry upon earth, we shall find them every where marked with the clearest indications of that kind, gentle, merciful, and indulgent disposition, by which he was indeed pre-eminently distinguished. Of the high estimation in which he held a disposition of that description, two striking instances, among many others,

are recorded in the Gospel of St. Matthew. The first, is the reply made by him to those merciless bigots, the hypocritical Pharisees, who affected to be offended at his condescending behaviour to Publicans and sinners. "Go," said that compassionate friend of sinners, "go and learn what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice." The second, is the condemnation pronounced upon their conduct for neglecting the most essential duties of religion, among which the exercise of mercy is particularly specified, whilst they were punctiliously exact in complying with ordinances of inferior importance. "Wo to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who pay tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have let alone the weightier things of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith." (MATT. c. xxiii. v. 23.) Is it not evident, therefore, that to yield to the impulse of that sort of zeal, which is productive of consequences so opposite to the genius and precepts of Christianity, and so pointedly censured by its heavenly founder, must argue a gross ignorance both of the Father and of the Son, like that which is ascribed, by our blessed Saviour, to the Jewish zealots in this day's Gospel? And may not the words of the Apostle St. James be, with propriety, applied to them, when he says, "but if you have a better zeal, and there be contentions in your hearts, glory not, and be not liars against the truth, for this is not wisdom descending from above, but earthly, sensual, devilish." (JAMES, c. iii. v. 14, 15.) How, in particular, is the

practice of condemning others for adopting tenets, which they conscientiously believe to be the true doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to be reconciled to the fundamental principle of the religious system of those, who admit the right of private judgment in matters of religion? But, whilst we blame, as the effect of ignorance, that bitter zeal which urges those who are actuated by it to deeds repugnant to the genuine spirit and dictates of Christianity, we must be careful to avoid the injustice of those who impute it to base and unworthy motives; and though we may ourselves be sufferers from it, we must treat it nevertheless, with the same indulgence which the Apostle of the Gentiles manifested to that of the Jews, when, in his epistle to the Romans, he acknowledged it in its principle to be good and commendable, although it was exercised on improper objects. And we should also do well to imitate his charity, in presenting to Heaven our most fervent petitions in behalf of those who are actuated by it. "Brethren," said that great Apostle, "the will of my heart, indeed, and my prayer to God is for them unto salvation, for I bear them witness, that they have the zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."

Let me not, however, be thought, in condemning that blind and misguided zeal, which prompts men to act inconsistently with the spirit and dictates of the Gospel, to be the advocate of lukewarmness and indifference in the sacred cause. No, my friends, such is not by any means the conclusion



to be drawn from the language I have used in addressing you on this subject, which has obviously arisen from an attentive perusal of this day's Gospel. On the contrary, I exhort you, in the words of St. Jude, "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." I do not wish to check your religious zeal, but to regulate it. My object is not to damp its ardor, but to smooth its asperities. I am only anxious that it be attended with the accompaniments necessary to constitute it a truly Christian zeal; that it be enlightened by knowledge, softened by meekness, sweetened by charity, and that its operations be conducted with a due regard to the feelings and characters of your neighbours, and not prostituted, as it too frequently is, to the scandalous purposes of insult and defamation. When accompanied with these qualities, it can not, I think, be too much applauded, or sufficiently encouraged. For surely, my friends, if there be an object worthy of your most ardent zeal, it is the promotion of the interests of that divine religion, which its heavenly founder condescended to come down upon the earth to establish, and which he consecrated with his blood; which is the depository of truths in the knowledge of which you are most deeply interested; which is your best consolation amidst the afflictions and troubles to which you are exposed in your journey through life; which is your main support in the agonies of death, and your secure guide to a blissful immortality. But in what manner are you

to exert your zeal for the promotion of the interests of that divine religion? Is it not by using your best endeavours to raise its character in the estimation of mankind, by labouring to diffuse its influence over their minds and hearts, by labouring to convince them of the truth of its doctrines, of the excellence of its precepts, and the purity of its worship? And by what means may you expect to attain these important ends? Surely not by assailing its opponents with passionate invectives, illiberal imputations, and scurrillous abuse. By this offensive mode of proceeding, you will injure instead of promoting the cause which you advocate. You will render it odious to the minds of those to whom it should be your study to make it appear amiable. You will raise up in their breasts a formidable host of angry passions, which will exasperate them against it, and prevent them from instituting a dispassionate enquiry into its real merits. If therefore you wish to promote by your zeal the interests of religion, it must be by pursuing a very different line of conduct in the exercise of it. It must be by means more conformable to the principles, and consonant to the spirit, of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It must be by instruction, by exhortation, by persuasion, and above all, by the edification of your virtuous lives. You should also accommodate yourselves to the tempers and dispositions of those with whom you may be engaged in religious discussions. You should conciliate their good-will, respect their

feelings, make every indulgent allowance for their prejudices, and imitate in their regard the liberal conduct of the Apostle of the Gentiles, “ who was weak,” as he says, “ with the weak, that he might gain the weak, and who was all things to all men, that he might gain all.” Thus, and thus only, will you effectually contribute, by the exertions of your zeal, to serve the cause of your holy religion. Thus, and thus only, will you be instrumental in enlarging, over the minds and hearts of men, the sphere of its dominion ; and thus will you recommend yourselves to the favor of the Most High, who will reward you hereafter with an abundant recompense.



## SERMON XXIV.

## WHIT-SUNDAY.

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 ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
 

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GOSPEL. *St. John*, xiv. v. 23-31. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples, If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my words; and the word which you have heard is not mine, but the Father's who sent me. These things have I spoken to you, abiding with you; but the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. You have heard that I said to you, I go away, and I come unto you. If you loved me, you would indeed be glad, because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it shall come to pass, you may believe. I will not now speak many things with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and in me he hath not any thing. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, so do I.

THE passage of the discourse delivered by our blessed Saviour to his apostles after his last supper, with which the Gospel of this day opens, was a reply to an inquiry which one of them made respecting that manifestation of himself to them, of which he had before spoken. "Judas said to him (not the Iscariot)," remarks the sacred text,

“ how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world ? ” As Judas and his colleagues appear to have expected that their divine Master would exhibit in his person that royal magnificence, by which, like the rest of the Jewish people, they seem to have imagined their Messiah was to be distinguished, they were at a loss to conceive why they alone were to be spectators of it. To rectify therefore their mistaken notions in that respect, Jesus informed them, that by the manifestation of which he had spoken, he did not mean an external display of worldly pomp, but that internal discovery of his divine perfections, which would be communicated to their souls, when, by the operations of the Holy Spirit, they should become, as it were, the temples of the Divinity, of which, in union with his heavenly Father, he possessed, as God, the entire plenitude. “ Jesus answered and said to him, if any one love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him.” Such, he intimated, was the sort of manifestation to which he alluded, and therefore, as that was to be restricted to those, who, like themselves, had a sincere affection for him, and who proved that affection by their faithful observance of his divine commands, so they were not to be surprised if it were denied to persons who, by their violation of his ordinances, shewed themselves destitute of any regard either for himself or for his heavenly Father, from whom those ordi-

nances emanated. “ He that loveth me not, keepeth not my words ; and the word, which you have heard, is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me.” Such, he said, were the disclosures which he had deemed it expedient to make during his residence among them. Further communications, however, he added, still remained to be imparted to them: were reserved for a later period, when enlightened and invigorated by the spirit of God, their minds would be better qualified for their reception. He promised that then, not only all the various truths which they had heard from his lips during the course of his ministry, should be brought distinctly to their recollection, and their understandings be enabled fully to comprehend them, but that they should be instructed, moreover, in the whole system of the divine economy relative to the salvation of the human race. “ These things have I spoken to you, abiding with you ; but the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your minds whatsoever I shall have said to you.” And, as “ peace be to you,” was the ordinary salutation in use among the Jews, not only when they met, but when they parted from each other, Jesus also thought proper to employ it in taking leave of his beloved apostles, from whom he was now about to be separated. Yet he observed, at the same time, that this salutation was not to be regarded in the same light in which it was generally considered ;



for that it was not a mere matter of form and ceremony, like that which customarily took place on such occasions, but that it implied a real and substantial blessing, which he actually bequeathed to them, which would be a comfort to them in the greatest afflictions, and a resource in the midst of the most formidable dangers. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Not as the world giveth, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid." Adverting then to what he had said to them of his approaching departure, he remarked, that the affection which they entertained for him should induce them to rejoice at the intelligence of an event which would redound so greatly to his honor; since that event would be nothing less than the transcendant exaltation of his human nature to the right hand of his eternal Father, to whom, as man, he was incomparably inferior. "You have heard that I said to you, I go away, and I come again to you. If you loved me, you would indeed be glad, because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I." But that their faith might not be shaken by the sight of the painful and ignominious sufferings to which, he foresaw, he should shortly be subjected, he thought it no more than right to acquaint them with the grand and glorious result which would be the consequence of them. For, as St. Paul observes, it was because "he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that God hath exalted him, and

given him a name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess, that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father." (PHILIP. *c. ii. v. 8-11.*) "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it shall come to pass, you may believe." A few words more, he added, and he must have done; since the agents of Satan, his bitter and unprincipled enemies, were about to assail him, though there was nothing in the blameless tenor of his conduct, to justify their approaching proceedings against him. For it was not, he intimated, to be imagined, that the humiliating treatment and disgraceful death which he was about to suffer, would be any proof of guilt on his part, from which he claimed a complete exemption; but that, as he submitted to them spontaneously, in conformity to the will of his heavenly Father, his submission to them was to be regarded as a practical demonstration of his filial affection. "I will not now speak many things with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and in me he hath not any thing. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, so do I."

The promise of the descent of the Holy Spirit, which, as stated in this day's Gospel, our blessed Saviour delivered to his apostles on the eve of his passion, was accomplished on the feast of Pente-

cost, which we this day celebrate. Pentecost (a word of Greek derivation, which signifies the fiftieth) was one of the great festivals of the *old* law. It was instituted in memory of the promulgation of that law on Mount Sinai, and commenced on the fiftieth day from the Paschal solemnity, which was designed to commemorate the miraculous deliverance of the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage. The Christian festival, which bears the same name, has been, in like manner, appointed by the Church to be observed by the faithful with religious veneration, to preserve the remembrance of the publication of the *new* law, and to afford them an opportunity of testifying their pious gratitude to God for that memorable event. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, that our blessed Saviour, a short time before his ascension into heaven, commanded his Apostles to remain in Jerusalem till the promise of the Father should be fulfilled, by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them. "He commanded them," says the sacred text, "that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father, which you have heard (saith he) from my mouth. For John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." (Acts, c. i. v. 4, 5.) The great, the important day at length arrived. It was the first day of the week, and the fiftieth from that of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, by which the seal of heaven was solemnly affixed to the emanci-



pation of the human race from the slavery of Satan, of which, that of the Jews from the servitude of Egypt was a figurative representation. In obedience to the injunction of their Divine Master, the Apostles were all assembled together. "A sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind, which filled the whole house in which they were sitting," announced the approach of the Holy Spirit. And the awful spectacle of "parted tongues, as it were, of fire," which were seen suspended over them, was an emblematical figure of his august presence. But it was not merely by signs and figures, that the presence of the Holy Spirit was notified to them. No! They experienced in themselves the wonderful effects of his supernatural influence. They spoke suddenly a variety of languages, without any previous study or application, "according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak." (Acts. c. ii. v. 4.) A new light burst instantaneously upon their minds. An unusual courage animated their hearts. They felt inflamed with an ardent zeal in the great cause of their crucified Master, which displayed itself in exertions the most extraordinary and stupendous. They stood forth manfully in vindication of his character. They fearlessly proclaimed his resurrection from the tomb, and declared themselves witnesses of that marvellous event. They boldly reproached the Jews with the enormity of their crime, in putting him to death, exhorted them to bewail it with penitential sorrow, urged them to accept, by repentance and baptism,

the gracious overture of mercy and forgiveness, preferred to them through the meritorious atonement of that precious blood which they had sacrilegiously spilled, and promised them, as the reward of their compliance with these terms, the remission of their sins, and the reception of the Holy Spirit." "But Peter said to them, do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Their ardor for the accomplishment of the great work which the Spirit of God had prompted them to undertake, was not to be restrained. No threats could intimidate them; no hardships discourage them; no torments divert them from the prosecution of their design. When silence was imposed upon them by the Jewish Sanhedrim, they peremptorily refused to obey; and they justified their disobedience by the unanswerable remark, that God is to be obeyed in preference to man. "But Peter and the Apostles answering said, we ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts, c. v. v. 29.) So strong was the impulse which they felt within them to declare aloud what, from the clearest evidence of their senses, they knew to be true, that it was not, they said, in their power to resist it. "We can not but speak the things which we have seen and heard." And when punished with flagellation for a conscientious discharge of their ministerial functions, "they went," says the sacred text, "from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they

were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." (ACTS, *c. v. v. 41.*) Such, my friends, were the astonishing effects produced by the Holy Spirit on the souls of the Apostles.

Let it be remembered also, my friends, that in the promise which our blessed Saviour made to his Apostles of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them, their successors in the ministry to the end of time, were unquestionably meant to be included; since he solemnly assured them that the Spirit of Truth, which should teach them all truth, should abide with them for ever. "And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever." (JOHN, *c. xiv. v. 16.*) Nor does the operation of this Divine Spirit in the Church of God, consist merely in the assistance which he affords its rulers to qualify them to preserve the integrity of its faith pure and inviolate from the contamination of error. No. To every individual of that spiritual establishment is the gracious promise of the Spirit of God extended in like manner, to enable them to attain the grand object for which it was constituted, the salvation of their immortal souls. This we learn from the words of Christ, in the Gospel of St. Luke, in which he has declared, that our Father who is in heaven, "will give the good spirit to those that ask him." This, St. Peter still more explicitly stated, when, on the very festival which we this day celebrate, he said to the Jews: "For the promise of the Holy Ghost is to you, and to your



children, and to all that are afar off, whomsoever the Lord our God shall call." (Acts, c. ii. v. 39.)

So essential indeed is the influence of the Holy Spirit on the souls of men, for the great purpose of their everlasting salvation, that all the unspeakable humiliations and sufferings of the Son of God himself, all that precious blood which he poured out so profusely for the redemption of mankind, must, without it, have proved ineffectual and useless. For the object accomplished by the great atonement made by Christ Jesus to the justice of his eternal Father, was the removal of the obstacle which precluded sinners from admission into his heavenly kingdom. But the removal alone of that obstacle was not sufficient to secure their entrance into that blessed abode. For although by the mightly force of his invincible arm he broke asunder that iron bar of inexorable justice, which otherwise must have kept the gates of heaven eternally shut against them, yet it should never be forgotten, that an indispensable condition on which, the Omnipotent Father consented to surrender the possession of the eternal city to this immortal champion of man's salvation, in favor of his adherents, was a faithful compliance with all the articles of that heavenly charter, which he commissioned him to promulgate. That charter is the great evangelical code. It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And whoever considers the arduous and comprehensive character of that sublime instrument, must surely be convinced of the utter incompetency of

the unassisted powers of human nature to observe its requisitions to their full extent. For it contains a multiplicity of severe injunctions, the violation of which renders the chartered privileges, which have been conceded, null and void. It imposes obligations humiliating to the pride of the human mind, repugnant to the propensities of the human heart, and painful to the feelings of flesh and blood. It commands us to believe what we cannot comprehend, to abstain from gratifications to which we are naturally inclined, and to practice self denials to which we are naturally averse. To doctrines involved in mysterious darkness, and which are utterly impenetrable to human reason, it demands a firm and unhesitating assent. It requires us to mortify our sensual inclinations, “to abstain from carnal desires which war against the soul, to forgive injuries, “to love our enemies,” “to pray for those who persecute and calumniate us,” to separate ourselves from all occasions of sin, although they be dear to us as a hand or an eye. “If thy right eye cause thee to offend, pluck it out, and cast it from thee. And if thy right hand cause thee to offend, cut it off, and cast it from thee.” (MATT. c. v. v. 29, 30.) These, and a variety of other duties, to which the corrupt nature of man is decidedly hostile, it rigorously enjoins. It prescribes, moreover, a heavenly frame of mind, in which charity rules predominant, producing, by the influence which it exercises over the faculties of the mind and the affections of the heart, all

those lovely and exalted virtues, which are the distinguishing ornaments of the Christian character.

To comply with terms of this description, is a task to which man's natural strength is wholly inadequate. He cannot "captivate his understanding to the obedience of Christ," whilst presumptuous reason urges him to rebel. He cannot be thought to have any relish for ordinances and maxims, which are at war with the inclinations of his corrupt heart. Nor can charity be conceived to reign in that soul which is subject to the dominion of inordinate self-love. And though, in speculation, he should admire the excellence of the law of Christ; though he should acknowledge it to be good, and just, and holy; though he should contemplate its principles with inward approbation, and also be willing to obey its dictates; yet he is destitute of ability to act conformably to his sentiments and desires. "For to will," says St. Paul, "is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good I find not. For the good which I will, I do not." (Rom. c. vii. v. 18-19.) "The law of his members fighting against the law of his mind, and captivating him in the law of sin which is in his members," (Rom. c. vii. v. 23) frustrates his best and most determined purposes.

In this our weak and impotent condition, the Spirit of God alone, my friends, can afford us assistance adequate to our wants. He alone, "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,"



can illuminate our minds with the knowledge of those divine truths, which reason's feeble ray is insufficient to disclose. To that same Divine Spirit, must we also have recourse for the demolition of those strong holds, those towering heights, and powerful engines of human sagacity, of which St. Paul speaks in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, "as opposed by pride to the oracles of God, and for the complete subjection of our understandings to the obedience of Christ. (2 Cor. *c.* x. v. 4, 5.) To the same inexhaustible source of invigorating and sanctifying grace, does it behove us, moreover, to apply for succour in that internal as well as external warfare, in which we are constantly engaged, with a potent confederacy of formidable enemies, who, from within and without, are incessantly assailing us by force or stratagem. By him, are we to be armed with that power from on high, by which the Apostles were enabled to fight their mighty battles, and to achieve their glorious conquests, subduing the rebellious world, and baffling the powers of darkness. By him, is the insurrection of disorderly passions within us to be quelled, and the tyrant self-love, which directs their operations, to be detruded from his usurped throne. There is no opposition, however powerful, that can withstand the force of his invincible arm. Our determinations and our actions are alike subject to his controlling influence. "For he it is," says the Apostle, "who worketh in us both to will, and to accomplish according to his

good will." (PHIL. c. ii. v. 3.) And as the usurper self-love is deprived of his lawless power, so charity, or the love of God, is established in the possession of her rightful sovereignty over our hearts by the same Divine Spirit. "For the charity of God," says St. Paul, "is poured abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us." (ROM. c. v. v. 5.) And when once the dominion of charity is established in the heart, it fails not to be accompanied with every other Christian virtue, which are its inseparable attendants. Finally, to the influence of the Holy Spirit, are attributed, in the sacred oracles, the purification of our hearts, the mortification of our passions, the sanctification of our lives, and consequently, the salvation of our immortal souls.

Pray then, my friends, pray with fervor to this Divine Spirit, to honor your souls with his august presence. Renovated by his supernatural influence, you will feel yourselves in a manner transformed into new creatures. Your views will be exalted, your understandings enlightened, your wills rectified, your affections purified. The invisible things of eternity will hold the principal place in your esteem. In compliance with the admonition of the Apostle, "you will mind the things which are above, not the things which are upon earth." The kingdom of God, and his justice, will be the primary objects of your pursuit. All your duties will become easy and pleasant. The yoke of Christ, which, to worldly-minded

men, is so galling and bitter, to you will be sweet; and his burden, which to them is so intolerably oppressive, will, to you, be light. In a word, you will enjoy, even in this life, an inward peace and satisfaction of mind, which will be a prelude to joys immeasurable and eternal, with which you will be inebriated hereafter in the kingdom of heaven.



## SERMON XXV.

### THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST,

BEING

### TRINITY SUNDAY.

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ON OUR RELATION TO THE THREE PERSONS OF THE  
BLESSED TRINITY.

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GOSPEL. *St. Matthew*, xxviii. v. 18-20. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples, All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going, therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you always even to the consummation of the world.

THE words of this day's Gospel were delivered by our blessed Saviour to his Apostles, from the summit of Mount Olivet. Being about to ascend on high in their presence, to take possession of his seat of glory, at the right hand of his eternal Father, he previously announced to them that sovereignty of dominion which had been delegated to him in his human nature, as the constituted mediator between God and man. "All power," said he, is given to me in heaven and in earth." That sovereignty of dominion he exercises in heaven, by dispensing to his faithful followers the choicest blessings of the celestial abode: and he exercises it on earth by the efficacy of his grace on their minds and hearts in their proba-

tionary state. Having thus distinctly and solemnly proclaimed the extent of his authority, he proceeded, in virtue of that high prerogative with which he was invested, to confer on his Apostles an office, at once the most important and sublime that was ever bestowed on the children of men. The office to which I allude was no other than that of instructing all the nations of the globe in the doctrines of eternal life ; of associating them by baptism, in the name of the most Holy Trinity, to the spiritual covenant of grace and mercy ; and of enforcing, by persuasion, an exact observance of the laws which he had enacted for the regulation of their conduct. “ Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” And that in an undertaking demanding such accurate information, and indefatigable exertion, they might not, in any manner, be alarmed or discouraged, he promised them the assistance of his supernatural influence, to enlighten and invigorate them to the end of time. “ And behold ! I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.” Here, my friends, it may not be improper to observe, that from the comprehensive terms in which our Blessed Saviour delivered to his Apostles their commission to teach, and from the extensive nature of the promise with which that commission was accompanied, it is obvious to conclude that he meant

them both to be applied to their successors in the ministry through every succeeding age. For how could he imagine that the Apostles themselves would be able, during their lives, to teach all nations? Or how could he be with them to the consummation of the world, when it is well known that the earthly existence of the most ancient among them did not exceed a century. Since, then, the Bishops of the Catholic Church are unquestionably the direct and lineal descendants of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, it follows that the commission contained in the Gospel, and the promise of security from the delusions of error which is annexed to it, are extended also to *thèm*, and that consequently to *them* it becomes us to listen with submissive docility, and to obey them with fidelity in their authoritative decisions, respecting both what it becomes us to believe and what to practice.

In the words of the Gospel which I have thus expounded to you, which were employed by our Blessed Saviour, when he commissioned his Apostles to preach his Gospel to the nations of the earth, that fundamental article of the Christian Religion, a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead, is evidently announced. “Going therefore,” said he “teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” It is also inculcated in a variety of other passages in Holy Writ, in which each of the three persons is distinctly mentioned,



and to each of whom the attributes of the Divinity are equally ascribed. It is moreover confirmed by the unerring authority of that infallible Church, to the rulers of which, as is recorded in the Gospel which you have just heard, the Son of God himself expressly promised the continued protection of his divine presence, to the end of the world "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world:" and against which, he assured on another occasion, the chief of his Apostles, St. Peter, that "the gates of hell should never be suffered to prevail;" for that Church has, at all times, declared it to be the genuine doctrine of its Divine Founder, and with peculiar solemnity proclaims it to us on the festival of this Sunday, sacred to the honor of that august mystery. I call it a mystery, for a mystery unquestionably it is, which the contracted powers of the human mind are wholly incompetent to comprehend. But our inability to comprehend, is not, by any means, a justifiable reason for calling in question the revelations of the Most High. As well might we call in question the reality of bodies which present themselves to our view in every direction; since though our senses bear testimony to their existence, yet our reason is not able to comprehend their nature. On all sides, my friends, we are surrounded with mysteries: we live and move in the midst of mysteries; and man is perhaps to himself the greatest mystery of all. Is it reasonable then, to demand a superior degree of knowledge concerning

heavenly things, than we possess in earthly things ? Or to expect to understand the nature of God, when we do not understand the nature of man ? Silence ! then, proud reason ; presume not to bear aloft thy haughty pretensions to the throne of the Eternal. Prostrate thyself in profound and humble submission before the Majesty of Heaven. God has spoken,—that is sufficient ; it is the duty of man to believe and to adore.

Instead of wishing for further information on a subject calculated to confound our reason, but to exercise our faith, let us be thankful rather for such disclosures as have been graciously made to us. Let us employ ourselves more profitably in meditating on the relations in which we stand to each of the three adorable persons of the most Holy Trinity, and labour assiduously to discharge the duties which those relations essentially imply. Remember then, my friends, in the first place, that the Eternal Father, the first person of the adorable Triad, is represented to us in the sacred oracles, as *our* Father. Yes, my friends, he is *our* Father. He is our Father by creation, and we, as his creatures, are consequently his children. “Have we not one Father,” says the prophet Malachi, “and hath not one God created us ?” (MAL. c. ii. v. 10.) He is our Father also, in a more especial manner, in virtue of our adoption through the infinite merits of his beloved Son. “For you are the children of God,” says St. Paul, in his epistle to the Galatians, “by faith in Christ

Jesus." (GAL. c. iii. v. 26.) "Behold," exclaims the disciple whom Jesus loved, "what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be, the sons of God." (1 JOHN, c. iii. v. 1.) Oh! what a grand, what an exalted dignity is conferred upon us by this august relation! To what an elevated rank we are raised by it in the scale of beings! Be you careful, therefore, my friends, not to degrade so honorable a condition by base and unworthy actions. Let no unseemly or ignoble thoughts, no vicious inclinations, no sinful or inordinate affections, be tolerated within you. Let your conduct, in every respect, be conformable to the high character with which you are invested. Demean yourselves as becomes the distinguished offspring of so illustrious a parent. "Be ye followers of God, as most dear children." (EPH. c. v. v. 1.) "Be ye perfect, (in short, according to the measure of your limited capacity) even as your Heavenly Father is perfect."

Recollect also, my friends, that you are encouraged by your Blessed Saviour, not only to consider the first person of the adorable Trinity as your Father, but as your Father who is in heaven. He fills indeed, it is true, all space with his immensity. But heaven is the place in which he may be conceived peculiarly to dwell, in quality of our Father. That is the paternal mansion destined for the reception of his dutiful children in a future state. It was to that blessed residence the



Saviour of mankind alluded, when, after his resurrection, he commissioned Magdalene to say, on his part, to his afflicted disciples : “ I ascend to my Father, and to your Father, to my God, and to your God.” (JOHN, *c.* xx. *v.* 17.) And it is there this most gracious and munificent of Fathers will communicate to his dearly-beloved children the boundless effusions of his paternal love. To that heavenly dwelling then, my friends, let your thoughts be habitually raised. Let it be your delight to contemplate that ecstatic joy, that inexpressible satisfaction, those inconceivably great and exalted blessings, reserved for you in the house of your Father : and let an inextinguishable ardor to possess them inflame your hearts. At present indeed, it is true, you are removed at a distance from the paternal mansion. But here also is the unparalleled goodness of your bountiful Father conspicuously displayed. For his design in sending you into this foreign country, in which you at present dwell, is to afford you an opportunity of acquiring those habits which may qualify you for the enjoyments of your future destiny. Yet even in this your preparatory state of discipline and education, he has provided you with many comforts : and if sometimes he allows you to be afflicted with calamities, you are to remember that he does so with a view to your advantage. “ He dealeth with you,” says the Apostle, “ as with his sons : for what son is there whom the father doth not correct. He chastiseth you for

your profit, that you may be partakers of his holiness." (HEB. c. xii. v. 7-10.) "Wherefore," adds the same Apostle, "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." (HEB. c. xii. v. 12.) Submit with resignation to his providential dispensations. Bend with humility under the weight of his chastisements. Kiss the hand which corrects, as well as that which dispenses comfort. Thank him, in short, for all things whatsoever he may allot to you, since the Apostle has assured us "that to those who love God all things work together unto good." (ROM. c. viii. v. 28.) And should you have the misfortune to incur, by your failings, the displeasure of your good and bountiful Father, be sure you do not forget that he is a merciful Father. Yes, my friends, "His mercies are over all his works." If you sincerely bewail, and humbly confess your offences against him, he is at all times ready to forgive. "Though your sins should be red as scarlet, he will make them white as snow." And if you imitate, on your part, the returning prodigal, you will be sure to find in him the indulgent tenderness of the most affectionate of parents. Could he possibly have given us a more convincing proof of this merciful disposition, than by sending his only-begotten Son to redeem us? "By this," saith the Apostle, "hath the charity of God appeared towards us, because God hath sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we may live by him, not as though we had loved God, but because he first loved us, and

sent his son to be a propitiation for our sins. (1 JOHN, *c.* iv. *v.* 9, 10.)

But if, my friends, our obligations must be acknowledged to be inconceivably great to the eternal Father, for "having thus loved the world," they cannot surely be imagined to be less to that beloved Son who condescended to accept the merciful commission. Alas! we were lost, irrecoverably lost, we were lost beyond the power of created beings to rescue us from perdition, when, emerging from the splendour of light inaccessible, "which he had with his eternal Father before the world was," (JOHN, *c.* xvii. *v.* 5.) this immortal champion of our salvation generously devoted himself to accomplish our deliverance. Clothing himself with the garb of our mortality, assuming the form of a slave, and subjecting himself to unspeakable humiliations and sufferings, he beat down that mighty Goliah, that infernal enemy, who had set at defiance every inferior effort; broke asunder the chains of our captivity, and restored us to "the liberty of the children of God." And what return are we called upon to make to our great deliverer, for this his generous and disinterested self-devotion in the cause of suffering and degraded humanity? Why, he requires no other than what gratitude urges, and our own interests imperiously demand. He requires that we do not frustate his charitable design, by counteracting the effects which it was his object to produce; that we do



not plunge those souls of ours into that abyss of woe, from which he laboured so strenuously to preserve them ; that we abandon them not to the grasp of the infernal serpent, to extricate them from which, he was so prodigal of his blood ; that we maintain with firmness that invaluable freedom, which, by his disinterested exertions, we have so happily recovered ; that we forfeit not, by our misconduct, that glorious inheritance, which, by his sufferings and death, he has so dearly purchased ; that we co-operate, in short, with him, in the accomplishment of that grand object which brought him down from heaven, and caused him to become a victim of propitiation for our sins, that is, the salvation of our immortal souls. For we are to remember, my friends, that, as St. Paul says, “ he gave himself for us not only that he might redeem us from all iniquity, but that he might cleanse to himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works.” (*TITUS*, *c.* ii. *v.* 14.) In order, therefore, to render the great work of man’s redemption, by the death of the Son of God, effectual in our regard for the important purpose for which it was undertaken, we must preserve ourselves pure from the defilement of sin ; “ we must live soberly, justly, and piously, in this world ; ” we must be assiduous in the performance of every good work ; we must endeavour to adorn the religion which we profess, by the practice of every virtue which it so forcibly enjoins, and of which the second person of the adorable Trinity has ex-

hibited to us, in his human nature, so complete a model. Surely, my friends, a task like this, in which duty and interest are inseparably commended, and which recommends itself to you by the strongest motives which a due sense of benefits received, is capable of suggesting to a grateful heart, should not experience in you a reluctance to undertake it. And yet, alas! such is the infirmity of our corrupt nature, that we are unable to perform it by the sole force of our unassisted efforts. Perceiving, as we do, “a law in our members fighting against the law of our minds, and captivating us to the law of sin, which is in our members,” (Rom. c. v. v. 23)—encompassed on all sides by seducing allurements congenial to it, and assailed by the temptations of the prince of darkness, how can we succeed in avoiding those evils to which we are at once so strongly attracted and forcibly impelled, by so potent a confederacy? How are we to acquire those virtuous habits, to which we experience, both from within and from without, so powerful an opposition? In this unequal contest with so formidable a host of foes, we cannot rationally expect any other result from our own unaided exertions, than complete discomfiture. But, blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath graciously furnished us with succour from above, abundantly sufficient to supply the deficiency of our natural strength, and to crown our arms with victory in the arduous conflict. And that succour, we have the happiness to derive

from the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the adorable Trinity.

Yes, my friends, in the proffered assistance of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the adorable Trinity, proceeding both from the Father and the Son, and possessing with them the entire plenitude of the Godhead, you have an inexhaustible supply of the choicest graces of heaven, adapted to all the various exigencies of your respective conditions. He is prepared at all times to be your protector and champion in the spiritual warfare in which you are engaged against the enemies of your souls. He is ready to guard you against their insidious machinations, to enable you to repel their violent attacks, and to ensure success to your persevering efforts. He will render the law of your minds triumphant over that of your members, and establish within you the sovereignty of its dominion. To the fascinating allurements of earthly vanities, he will oppose the incomparably more attractive charms of heavenly delights ; and depriving thus the infernal tyrant of the aid of his two most powerful auxiliaries, he will put it out of his power to do you an injury. Thus “ being delivered from the hands of your enemies, you will serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and justice before him all your days.” (LUKE, *c. i. v. 74, 75.*) Your hearts will be converted by his sanctifying influence into sacred repositories of every Christian virtue. And thus will he enable you to reap here-



after the precious fruits of the redemption of the Son of God, in the blissful kingdom of his heavenly Father. Such, my friends, and many more than time will permit me at present to enumerate, are the inestimable blessings accruing to us from the influence of the Holy Spirit, who is graciously promised in the sacred oracles to the earnest prayers of the humble suppliant. "If you, being evil," said our blessed Saviour to his disciples, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask them." (LUKE, *c. xi. v. 13.*)

Let us then, my friends, pray with the utmost fervor that our souls may become the temples of this Holy Spirit. Let us endeavour to receive him with the most profound sentiments of reverential awe. Let us be careful not to "grieve him" by our indifference and neglect. But listening attentively to his secret suggestions, and abandoning ourselves without reserve to his divine impulse, let us follow invariably the course which he may direct us to pursue. Thus shall we be maintained in the ennobling rank of children of the Most High. "For whosoever," says St. Paul, "are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. And if sons, heirs; heirs, indeed, of God, and joint heirs with Christ." (ROM. *c. viii. v. 14, 17.*) Thus shall we discharge the important duties resulting from the relation which we bear to

the Holy Spirit. And thus shall we present him with a tribute of homage which will be grateful to him beyond every other, to whom with the Father and the Son, three persons and one God, be honor, glory, and benediction, for ever and ever. Amen.

## SERMON XXVI.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST,

BEING

THE SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF  
CORPUS CHRISTI.

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ON COMMUNION.

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GOSPEL. *St. Luke*, xiv. v. 16-24. At that time, Jesus spoke to the Pharisees this parable : A certain man made a great supper, and invited many, and he sent his servant at the hour of supper to say to them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready. And they began all at once to make excuse. The first said to him, I have bought a farm, and must needs go out and see it ; I pray thee hold me excused. And another said, I have bought five yokes of oxen, and I go to try them ; I pray thee hold me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. And the servant returning told these things to his lord. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the feeble, and the blind, and the lame. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said to the servant, go out into the high ways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. But I say unto you, that none of those men that were invited shall taste of my supper.

THE parable contained in this day's Gospel, appears to have been intended by its divine author, to designate figuratively the rejection of the Jews, and the vocation of the Gentiles. The distinguished personage, represented in the parable to



have made a great supper, was Jesus Christ. By the supper is to be understood the dispensation of the Gospel. The persons invited to partake of it were the Jewish people, to whom the Gospel was first preached by the apostles of Jesus Christ, and to whom, therefore, may fairly be applied the commission given to the servant in the parable, to inform those who were invited, that all things were in a state of readiness for their reception, and that it only remained for *them*, in compliance with the invitation of the master of the feast, to place themselves at his table, and share in his repast. "And he sent his servant at the hour of supper, to say to them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready." As, however, the latter are described in the parable to have declined the invitation, and to have alleged, moreover, a variety of excuses for their refusal, so did the Jews, in like manner, ungratefully reject the overtures of grace made to them by the apostles of Jesus Christ, whilst they added a diversity of unwarrantable pretexts to justify their obstinate and perverse conduct. "And they began all at once to make excuse. The first said to him, I have bought a farm, and I must needs go out and see it; I pray thee hold me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them; I pray thee hold me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Indignant at the rude and insulting behaviour of these unworthy individuals,

the master of the feast, according to the parable, commissioned his servant to introduce the poor, the feeble, the blind, and the lame, who were within the walls of the city, and not only such, but even to compel others who were not within its walls, to enter his dwelling, and to be partakers of his banquet. He then added, that with respect to those who had so rudely slighted his gracious invitation, they should not be suffered even to taste of his supper. Thus, too, did the Redeemer of mankind, when the unhappy Israelites, by their rejection of the Gospel, which had been preached to them by his apostles, had incurred his displeasure, direct the latter to apply themselves, in the first place, to the conversion of those Gentiles to his faith, who, because they had renounced idolatry, and worshipped God according to the dictates of the law of nature, although they did not, in other respects, observe the ordinances of the law of Moses, were permitted to reside within the walls of the city, and were, on that account, nominated proselytes of the gate; and to address themselves, in the next place, to the idolatrous worshippers of false gods, who were not allowed to dwell within the precincts of Jerusalem; and to employ that kind of compulsive force which rational argumentation, aided by the assistance of divine grace, fails not to exercise over every sincere and well disposed mind, in order to impel them to enter into his church. Such, my friends, is the sort of compulsion to which the Gospel here

alludes, and not that of external violence, which may make, indeed, dissembling hypocrites, but which never has been known to make a sincere convert; and which is as abhorrent from the spirit of genuine Christianity, as it is repugnant to the dictates of reason and humanity. “And the servant returning, told these things to his lord. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the feeble, and the blind, and the lame. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said to the servant, go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” How completely the declaration of the parable by which the master of the feast excluded those whom he had invited from tasting even of his supper, has been verified in the unfortunate posterity of Abraham, is apparent in that pertinacious and unconquerable resistance which they have constantly opposed, and which they still continue to oppose, to the glad tidings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. “But I say unto you, that none of those who were invited shall taste of my supper.” Such, my friends, I believe to be the real meaning, which it was the intention of Christ to convey in the allegorical narrative presented to us in the parable of this day’s Gospel. But, as the church has selected it for the Sunday within the octave of the festival of Corpus Christi, sacred to the



mystery of that great supper, which was prepared by our blessed Saviour on the eve of his passion, and of which his followers continue to be invited to participate, I mean this day to consider it in that particular point of view, and to draw from it such reflexions as thus considered the subject may suggest.

Jesus Christ, then, my friends, the great master of this sumptuous repast, now authorizes the ministers of his word, to use the same language to every individual capable of discerning the body of the Lord, as that in which the apostles were formerly commissioned to address the master of the house where it was his intention to eat the paschal lamb with his disciples. “Go ye, said he, into the city to a certain man, and say to him, the master saith, my time is near at hand, I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.” (MATT. c. xxvi. v. 18.) Yes, my friends, to each individual among you, I am authorized, like the apostles, to say, in the name of my divine master, I will keep the passover at thy house. There is this difference, however, to be remarked, that the person to whom the apostles were sent was not himself invited to partake of the feast, whilst you, my friends, are not only invited, but urged and solicited to become his guests. “O sacred banquet,” exclaims the Church, in her solemn office at the present season, “O sacred banquet, in which Christ is received, the memory of his passion is renewed, the mind is replenished with grace, and

a pledge is given us of future glory ! " Will you then refuse, like the unhappy men in the parable, to accept the condescending and gracious invitation of your Saviour, to so grand, so salutary, so delicious, a repast ? What ? He has prepared for you an entertainment where the richest delicacies of heaven are laid before you, and can you contemplate it with coldness and indifference ? Nor does he, in order to be partakers of this heavenly banquet, require you to go to some distant spot, as the Jews were obliged to repair to Jerusalem to celebrate their passover, which was no more than a figurative representation of it. No : it is at home, it is in your own houses, it is in the very centre of your own souls, that he is willing himself in person to furnish you with this celestial repast. Should you not then, my friends, deem yourselves the happiest of human beings, in being permitted to receive him into your inward dwellings, and to enjoy, in delicious intercourse with him, all those exquisite and unutterable delights, with which he is prepared to feast your souls ? But, oh ! with what humble prostration of soul, with what profound sentiments of respect and veneration, does it become you to receive so august a personage, who condescends, in the immensity of his goodness, to honor your souls with his august presence ! What rapturous expressions of praise, adoration, and gratitude, should attest your deep sense of such unparalleled condescension ! Only consider in what manner you would be affected, if suddenly

emerging from those mysterious clouds, which cover as it were his divine countenance in the sacrament of the altar, he stood forth this moment to view, arrayed in all the splendour of his glory. How would the faculties of your souls be oppressed! How would they sink beneath the weight of his transcendent majesty! So magnificent a spectacle would deprive you of the power of utterance. It would strike you dumb. And it would extort from you a prostrate tribute of silent homage, more expressive far than the most energetic terms of language are able to convey. But why wait for the testimony of the senses to inspire you with sentiments of reverential awe? The senses are fallacious, and may possibly deceive you. But Christ, my friends, cannot deceive you. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away." They are immutably stamped with the broad seal of his eternal veracity. Now Christ himself has positively announced to you the actual presence of the word made flesh, under those sacramental veils which conceal him from our sight. "This," said he, "is my body, this is my blood." "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." The apostles propagated the sacred truth with not less ardor than they proclaimed the divinity of their heavenly master; and the same has been transmitted to us, at the present day, pure and uncontaminated by their successors in the ministry, in opposition to all the fruitless attempts of its adversaries to check or adulterate



it. Surely then, my friends, you are not to be thought the dupes of a superstitious credulity, you are not to be thought to have abandoned your reason, or to be destitute of common sense in professing your belief of a doctrine established, as this is, on the firm basis of such unexceptionable testimony. Let faith, therefore, my friends, supply the deficiency of sense. Animated by a strong and lively faith, your minds will pierce those mysterious veils, behind which the incarnate Son of God lies humbly concealed. You will there behold him surrounded by myriads of angelic spirits. You will see them administering to him in prostrate adoration. You will hear them, in ravishing strains of harmony, sounding forth his praises, and singing with a loud voice, in the language of the Apocalypse,—“ The lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction.” You will feel within you an irresistible impulse to unite your voices with theirs, and like them, you will be awed into sentiments of the most profound adoration.

Remember, however, my friends, that as in the animal economy, if the body be diseased, the food which nourishes and invigorates it, when healthy, serves only to increase its complaint, so likewise in the spiritual economy, if the soul be a prey to any of those malignant and deadly distempers which extinguish in it the sanctifying influence of the Spirit of God, the bread of life, of which it is

given to you to partake in this heavenly banquet, instead of causing you to experience the salutary effects which that divine aliment is qualified to produce, will only tend to aggravate your disorders, and to expose you to the danger of everlasting death, since the Apostle of the Gentiles has expressly assured you, “that whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.”

Think not, however, my friends, that by stating to you the baneful consequences of approaching unworthily to the table of the Lord, it is by any means my wish to deter you from having recourse to that inexhaustible source of grace and sanctity. God forbid that ever I should be so unfortunate as to inspire your minds with such unsalutary terrors. God forbid that ever I should be instrumental in frustrating so effectually the charitable design of your loving Saviour; that ever it should be my unhappy lot to counteract, by any feeble exertions of mine, those precious words of eternal life, those pressing invitations and imperious commands, urging you to partake of that life-giving food, which came down from heaven for the nourishment of your souls. Better, far better, had it been, my dearly beloved friends, both for you, and for myself, that my lips had been closed for ever in eternal silence, than that ever they had been opened to so fatal a purpose. No, I wish not by any means to discourage you from having recourse

to the bread of life ; I am only anxious, that by expelling from your souls every morbid principle of corruption calculated to defeat its salutary influence, you should derive from it that spiritual nourishment and vigor which it was intended to impart.

But what measures does it behove you to adopt, that you may derive from it these beneficial effects? Why, what measures are you accustomed to adopt, when you labor under any bodily complaints? Are you not in the habit, on such occasions, of making application to some experienced physician? Do you not give him all the information in your power to assist him in forming an opinion of your disorder? Do you not with sincerity make him acquainted with the hidden sources from which it may have sprung? Do you not disclose to him the date of its origin, the circumstances which may have promoted its progress, the means by which you may have accelerated and strengthened it, and whatever else may tend to give him a complete knowledge of your case, and enable him to prescribe a proper remedy? Do you not receive from him, with all due submission, the prescriptions of his art? And are you not careful, moreover, to observe those prescriptions with scrupulous exactitude, in order that you may recover your former health? Just so, my friends, it is incumbent upon you to act in the maladies which afflict the soul. You must have recourse to your spiritual physician. You must expose to him, with single-



ness of heart, the character of your disease. You must lay before him the hidden springs, the disorderly inclinations, from which it may have arisen. You must discover to him the period of its birth, its progressive growth, and whatever may have contributed to give it force, and to increase its malignity.

The exposition of your complaint to the physician of your souls will not, however, be sufficient to remove it, unless it be accompanied with a faithful compliance with that important prescription, which he delivers to you in the name of his Divine Master: "unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish." Yes, my friends, if you wish to be released from the guilt of sin, you must bewail it with sentiments of penitential sorrow. This, indeed, is so necessary a condition, that the sentence of pardon pronounced in your behalf by the minister of reconciliation will be converted, by the want of it, into a sentence of condemnation, at a higher tribunal. Here, too, my friends, I think it incumbent upon me to put you upon your guard against that false and counterfeit species of sorrow by which, it is to be apprehended, that too many are apt to be deluded to the great detriment of their immortal souls. Remember then, that your sorrow, in order to be effectual, must be the result of the operation of divine grace, producing in you a change of heart, prompting you to firm and determined resolutions of future amendment, and stimulating you to the adoption of such mea-

asures as may enable you to carry them into execution. Such, my friends, is the sorrow which should rend your hearts, in order to purify them from the guilt of sin, so adverse to all the beneficial effects which the bread of life was intended to produce.

But if, from the contemplation of the transcendent dignity of the Lord of glory, who, though invisible to the human eye, is truly and substantially present in the sacrament of the altar, it becomes you to approach him with the most profound sentiments of reverential awe; do not forget, in consideration of that ineffable bounty which he here displays, to offer him a tribute, which will be acceptable to him beyond every other, the inestimable tribute of a grateful heart glowing with the flame of divine love. Oh ! my friends, you must indeed be insensible, you must be totally incapable of love and gratitude, if the engaging and beneficent conduct of your Divine Redeemer in the sacred mysteries, do not call them forth. Never, no, never, can his affectionate kindness be manifested towards you in a more distinguished manner. Never can he appear more amiable and alluring. He comes to visit you in the most lowly and gracious form. The splendour of his divinity is laid aside, that he may not oppress you with the weight of its effulgence. He also conceals his humanity from you, as that might be an obstacle to the intimate union by which he desires to be connected with you. And presenting himself to

you under the familiar appearance of ordinary food, he solicits, with sweet and gentle importunity, admission into your breasts. He comes loaded with an immense profusion of unutterable blessings. He comes to be your strength, your consolation and support, under all the difficulties which you may have to encounter in your passage through life. He comes, my friends, to assuage your sorrows, to alleviate your burthens, to heal your infirmities, to feed and nourish you with that immortal food, of which he who eateth shall live for ever; to inebriate you with torrents of that living water, of which he who drinketh, shall not thirst for ever. In a word, he comes applying at once to your souls all the precious fruits of his sufferings and death, and imparting to them an anticipation of the inexpressible delights prepared for your enjoyment throughout eternity. Surely, my friends, you will not, you cannot, be insensible, to those amiable and endearing charms, which distinguish so eminently every feature of your benign Saviour on the present occasion. You cannot contemplate that immense store of the choicest blessings allotted to you in this incomprehensible mystery of love, without feeling within you the most ardent glow of divine charity. Will you then, like the men in the parable of this day's Gospel, refuse to become guests at that heavenly banquet, from which such satisfaction and advantages are to be derived? Will you allege, like them, those frivolous pretexts of worldly occupa-



tions, to apologize for such cold and criminal neglect? That your earthly concerns should occupy to a certain degree your attention and care, it is not by any means my wish to deny. But then it is to be remembered, at the same time, that they are not to be suffered to engross exclusively your thoughts, that they must not be allowed to shut out from your minds the more important interests of eternity; and that, if your attachment and application to them, and your anxiety about them, be carried to such an excess, as to prevent you from accepting the pressing invitations of your Divine Saviour to partake of that spiritual banquet, which, in his infinite condescension and goodness, he has prepared for you on *earth* in the sacrament of the altar, they will exclude you likewise for ever from all participation in that eternal banquet in *heaven*, which constitutes the happiness of the just made perfect. “ But I say to you, that none of those men who were invited shall partake of my supper.”

Let no earthly consideration whatsoever deter you, therefore, my friends, from approaching the table of the Lord. But with hearts purified from the defilement of sin, and glowing with the flame of divine love, proceed, with due humility and respect, to present yourselves at it. And not only will you be furnished with an abundant supply of spiritual strength, but you will be regaled, moreover, with an immense profusion of

inexpressible delights, exceeded only by the joys of heaven, for the fruition of which they will be the means of preparing you.

END OF VOL. I.

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